

YOUR ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO THE FUTURE OF XBOX

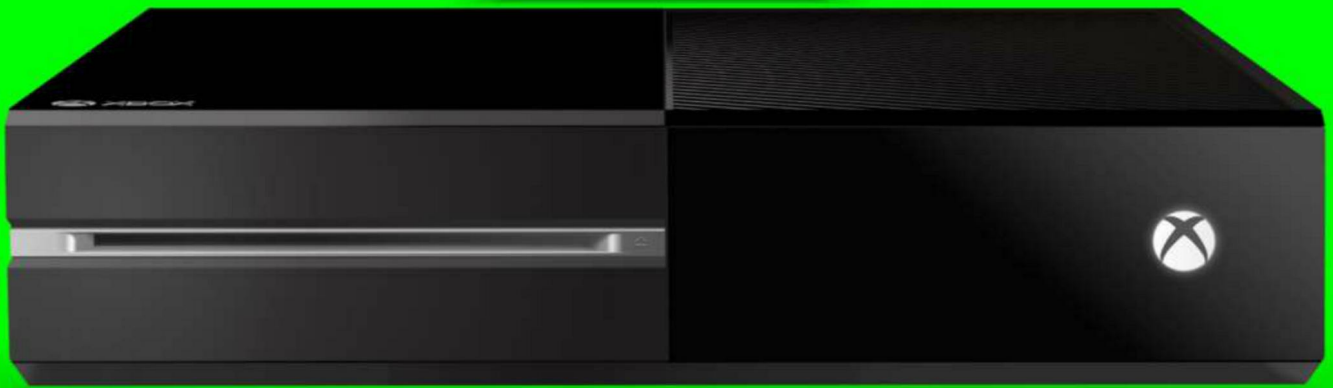
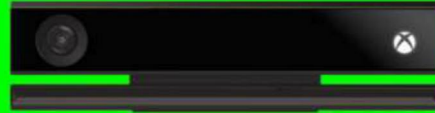


Issue 100 July 2013

www.oxm.co.uk

XBOX 360

THE OFFICIAL XBOX MAGAZINE



EXCLUSIVE ACCESS

XBOX ONE

Hands-on with the next generation
Hardware • Games • Live • More



CALL OF DUTY: GHOSTS
NEW ENGINE! NEW HEROES!
NEW DOGS!



FIFA 14
XBOX GETS AN ULTIMATE
TEAM EXCLUSIVE!



FORZA HORIZON 3
LEARNING AI, ASTONISHING
VISUALS & MORE TOP GEAR



WATCH DOGS
TAKING CONTROL OF AN
AMAZING NEW WORLD

PLUS
GRAND THEFT AUTO
THE WORST
OF XBOX 360
THE EVIL WITHIN
WOLFENSTEIN



Future



Issue 100 July 2013 £5.99

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Official fuel consumption figures in mpg (l/100km) for the Ford Fiesta ST 1.6 EcoBoost (182PS): urban 35.8 (7.9), extra urban 58.9 (4.8), combined 47.9 (5.9).
Official CO₂ emissions 138g/km. Vehicle shown is the Ford Fiesta ST2 in Molten Orange with ST Style Pack (colour and Pack available at additional cost).

CRED.



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GEARS of WAR

JUDGMENT



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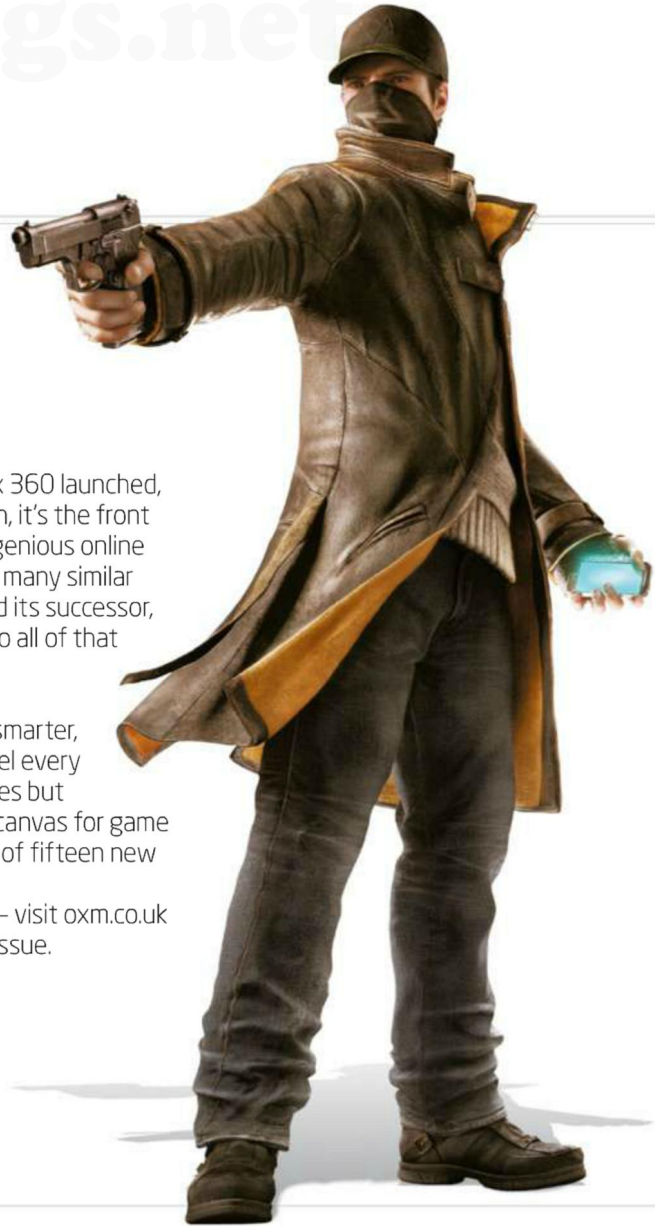


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XBOX 360

THE OFFICIAL XBOX MAGAZINE



Welcome...

...to the dawn of a new generation



The rules of console gaming have changed. When the Xbox 360 launched, it was a box under your TV that played discs. Eight years on, it's the front end for a vast collection of digital titles and increasingly ingenious online modes, and shares your attentions with a phone that does many similar things. It also, of course, plays discs. Microsoft has designed its successor, which we've revealed in painstaking detail on page 24, to do all of that but better – and, crucially, to evolve.

This isn't just a shinier box with better graphics. By tying the new box's considerable horsepower to the endless servers of Xbox Live, games can be smarter, and bigger, and learn from their players. The new controller means you can feel every impact; the new Kinect means every game can react not only to button pushes but your facial expressions, and movement, and heartbeat. It's an amazing blank canvas for game developers to use, and the new *Forza*, exclusively detailed on p34, is just one of fifteen new exclusive titles that'll push the new features to the limit.

There are still some big questions, and hopefully they'll be answered at E3 – visit oxm.co.uk to find out – but so far it really does feel like the future of gaming. Enjoy the issue.

Jon

Jon Hicks
OXM Jonty

jon.hicks@futurenet.com

The team – and how they spent the month



Editor
Jon Hicks
Gamertag: OXM Jonty
E: jon.hicks@futurenet.com
T: @MrJonty

Went to Redmond to see Xbox One, returned shortly after for the announcement of Xbox One, and is now at E3 to see some games for Xbox One. Visibly flinches at the words "Xbox One".



Associate Editor
Jon 'Log' Blyth
Gamertag: OXM Log
E: jon.blyth@futurenet.com
T: @disappointment

Started taking photographs of every dog he sees, in an attempt to be the master of his own profound futility. The news that *CoD Ghosts* has a dog thus put it at the top of his must-play list.



Staff Writer
Aoife Wilson
Gamertag: OXM Aoife
E: aoife.wilson@futurenet.com
T: @AoifeLockheart

Aoife's hair is generated by an algorithm that was discovered in Egyptian hieroglyphs. It can take the form of your greatest fear, which you must battle in the sixth dimension.



Deputy Editor
Edwin Evans-Thirlwell
Gamertag: OXMETBoy
E: edwin.evans-thirlwell@futurenet.com
T: @dingiblebill

Edwin requested that we refrain from mocking his posh accent, this month. Well, we think that's what he said. It's hard to tell through all the silver spoons and swan gut pate.



Production Editor
Jenny Meade
T: @JennyMeade

Out of office today, so we can write anything. So, this month, right, Jenny got drunk and punched a pelican in the gullet. Heel!



Writer
Chris Scullion
T: @Scully1888

Congrats to Chris, who went to Scotland, put on a skirt, and got married this month. They're wonderfully open-minded up there.



Writer
Matthew Pellett
T: @Pellicki

The editor of Gamesmaster is in a period of ongoing mourning after the death of Patrick Moore. When will the BBC appoint a new one?



Writer
Craig Owens
T: @craig_owens

Craig bumps the number of bespectacled gents on the team up to a robust 50%, which probably proves video games make you clever.

Subscribe Now!
Save 23% and get a copy of *Far Cry 3*!



Sign up today to get one of the best shooters on Xbox 360 for free!
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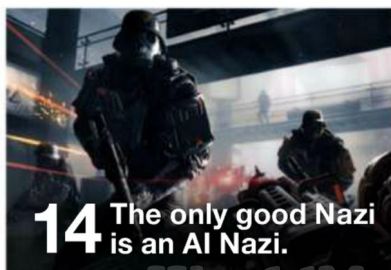
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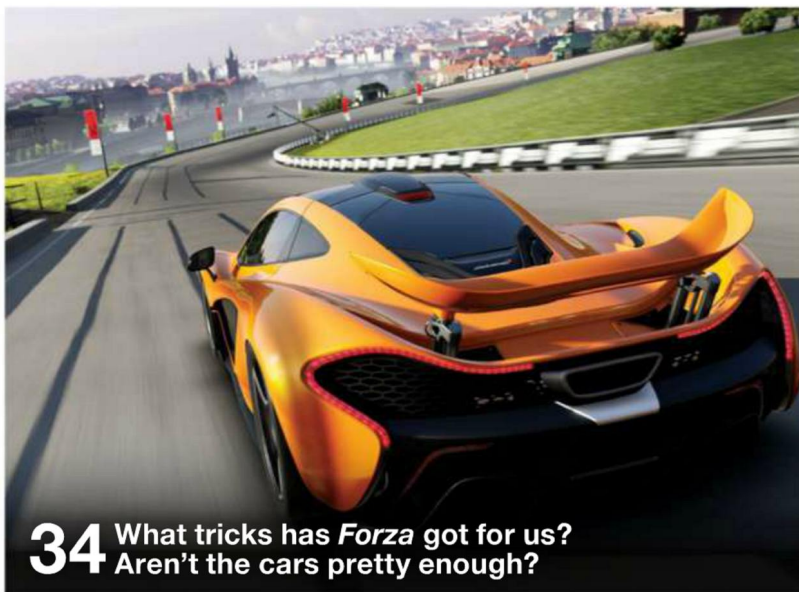
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Zombie adventure *Dying Light* kicks off this month's Xbox One coverage.

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It's like an arbitrary ladder of approval with each rung less distasteful than the last. Come climb our ladder!

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Harmonix brings Disney's *Fantasia* to Xbox, plus some numbers that give you a blistering insight into our souls.

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Did the live reveal leave you hungry? Here's all the stuff it didn't mention.

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Find out how a racing game spells the end of artificial intelligence.

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Six pages of details that we're forced by convention to describe as "juicy".

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Don't steal our thunder, Xbox One. We've got our own thing going on.

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Checking out the classics, and remembering more innocent times.



Subscribe to OXM and get a free copy of *Far Cry 3*. Turn to page 71 for details.

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DASHBOARD

Expanding on the daily news at www.oxm.co.uk with expert comment and community opinion

Next-Gen Nasties

Dying Light just gave the zombie genre a new pair of legs

You're losing time. Every minute you're not sprinting towards the supply drop is a minute someone else is, and you need that medicine. But as you dodge zombies, you hear a whimper – a girl crying. What do you do? The answer is clear: climb a nearby tree, kick off onto a rooftop and then leap to the building the noise was coming from. After a brief face-off with a zombie you find the girl, shaking in a closet. "You need to leave," she whispers. "Daddy got angry."

"No, not the face! It's a thing of rotting beauty."



The hug a hoodie ethos wasn't always followed.



Created by Techland, the studio behind *Dead Island*, *Dying Light* is part *Mirror's Edge* and part *Walking Dead*; a first-person adventure that drops you into a zombie-packed world. Luckily, you can explore freely thanks to a nimble protagonist who can climb ledges, shimmy up poles, leap off zombies' heads, and navigate the world in other speedy, acrobatic ways. As you explore you'll find missions to complete, items to create, loot to gather and monsters to slay.

But there's a catch. You're infected, and your time is running out. This does at least give you the ability to sense other creatures in the world, making it easier to sneak undetected when night rolls around. You're also well equipped to do battle when the need arises. We watched the developer, in a nod to *Dead Island*, upgrade and improve a



You aren't the only scavenger in town.

machete with an electric kick. We also saw the game's protagonist leap off a rooftop while wielding a sledgehammer and come smashing down, landing so hard he sent all enemies within range stumbling back.

Dying Light looks good, too, with highly-detailed backgrounds and an astonishing number of enemies on screen at the same time. It'll look even better on the Xbox One when it launches next year.



UBISOFT CANCELS AC CREATOR'S NEXT GAME

Not a happy reunion after all, then. Just two months after Ubisoft bought THQ Montreal, a studio headed by ex-Ubi employee Patrice Désilets, Désilets was fired and his game placed on indefinite hold. Allegedly, Ubisoft isn't cancelling the project because the IP rights would revert to Désilets.

PLAY DEATHSTROKE IN ARKHAM ORIGINS

Leaked by Amazon's US site is the presence of "Playable Deathstroke DLC" in WB Montreal's *Arkham* prequel. Will the swords-and-gun-favouring merc be this game's second-string protagonist, à la Catwoman in *Arkham City*? Or will he turn up in the rumoured multiplayer mode?



"The catch is you're infected, and your time is running out"

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17 HALO MOBILE *Halo*, on mobiles now? Is there anywhere the Chief won't go?

18 HOT TOPIC Will the Xbox One be the last Xbox? Or will a new generation rise in the 2020s?



19 MOST WANTED Remedy might not be working on *Alan Wake 2* just yet, but that doesn't stop us wanting more.

HERO



BLOOD DRAGON MOVIE TRAILER

Seriously, why wasn't the game exactly like that?

OXM

It's our birthday. We're allowed to put ourselves in here once every 100 issues.



ILLUMIROOM

A wall of snow from Microsoft's prototype projector would be sweet at Christmas.

NEXT-GEN GIF WARS

Soon all disputes will be settled by animated GIF.

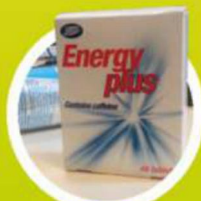


WOLFENSTEIN

Are we excited? We just don't know. Read more in our First Look (p14).

OWN-BRAND ENERGY PILLS

The Boots Energy Plus... they do nothing.



STAR WARS WAIT

The next game's in Spring 2014. We know they're hit and miss, but still....

STAPLER BEAR

He got lost in the office move. We salute you, Stapler Bear.



ZERO



IS FAR CRY HD COMING TO XBOX 360?

What's that we spot on the high-definition horizon? Is it an HD re-release of the original *Far Cry*? A listing posted on a Brazilian ratings board would certainly seem to suggest so, and it would make sense following Crytek's successful XBLA version of *Crysis*, and *Far Cry 3*'s popularity.



Route 666

The Road to Hell is paved with, well, tarmac

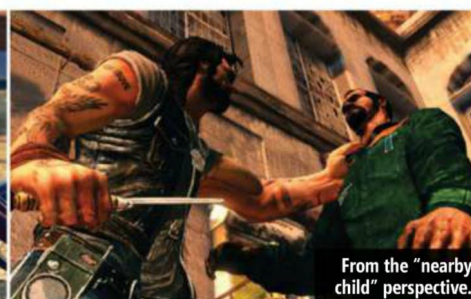
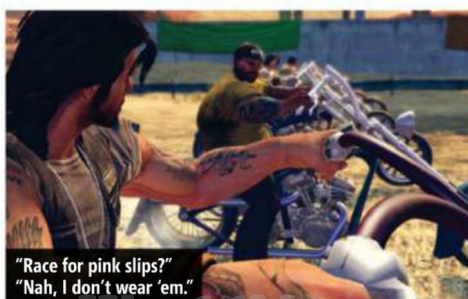
Back in 2009, *Ride to Hell* was an open-road action adventure that drank deep from the well of psychedelic late-'60s biker and hippie counter-culture. Deep Silver's recently re-announced *Ride to Hell: Retribution* is not that game. Okay, maybe not exactly *not* that game.

Gone is Vietnam prisoner of war Ray Kaminski of 2009's unveil. He's been replaced by Jake Conway, a revenge-minded ex-military tough guy who won't let the kickback from a shotgun knock him off his ride. New star aside, *Retribution* still aims to offer up a mix of motorcycle riding and on-foot exploration, complete with the ability to duke it out in either setting.

Conway is one man against the world, employing counters and takedowns against crowds of enemies – much like Batman, if Batman

used guns and a baseball bat wrapped in barbed wire. Using your hog to navigate from one location to the next is one way to move the story along, but the developer promises some colourful characters to give you a reason to stray from the Interstate. These non-playable civilians dole out info and sometimes act as foils to Conway's quest with "motivations that are sometimes at odd with yours," says senior creative producer and brand manager, Isaac Parakhen. "At certain points, you'll also be able to pick who you want to take down next and ride off to try to seek out information about those targets."

The trailer showed nothing in the way of action, which is a real cause for alarm when we're so close to the slated June release date. Approach cautiously then, and definitely wait for the reviews to come trickling in.





Anyone got a spare £125,000 lying around?

GRID 2 SPECIAL EDITION COSTS £125,000

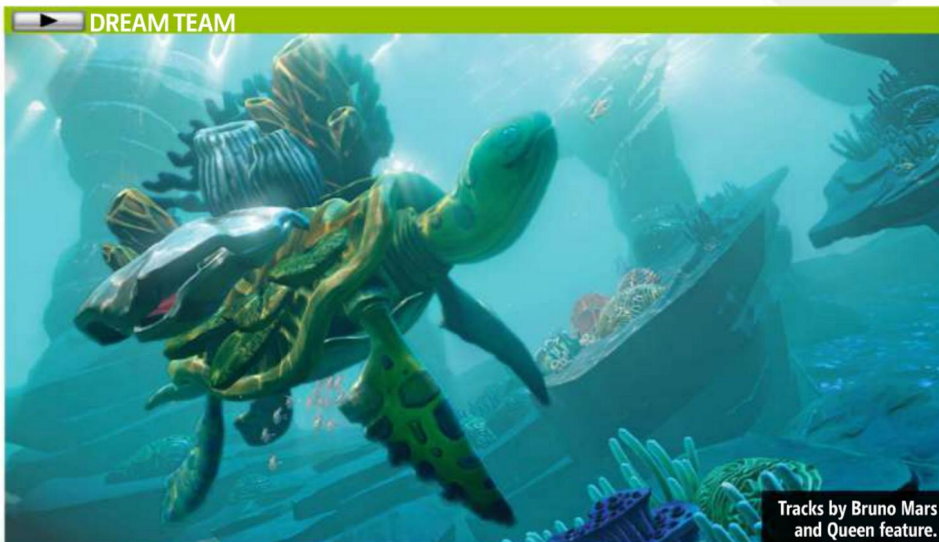
Eye-watering, right? Though to be fair to Codemasters, there's only one copy and it contains more than a badly painted figurine and some art cards. It comes with a car: a BAC Mono, and you also get a PS3 and a copy of the game along with a branded race suit, boots and gloves.

Month in Numbers

Team OXM's antics via the medium of infographics

Office References to... The Xbox Reveal

- 5** Log Watched it on a five-minute delay, making him seem stupid on Twitter
- 11** Aoife The time she left the office after five hours of maintaining a stoic calm
- 15** Edwin Number of stories put online per minute, like an internet machine
- 5000** Jonty Number of words he wrote about it in a jet-lagged article



Tracks by Bruno Mars and Queen feature.

Musical Magic

Rock Band creator Harmonix teams up with the House of Mouse in Fantasia. Brooms and buckets not included

Talented music game maestro Harmonix has teamed up with IP holder Disney Interactive to make *Fantasia*, loosely based on the 1940 film. Harmonix's game isn't a direct adaptation, but it is intended to evoke Mickey's magic-fuelled creativity. This Kinect title casts you as a sorcerer's apprentice taken to a series of magical, musical playgrounds to hone your gestural power.

Gameplay breaks down into two main, overlapping avenues. The first is exploration sequences – one set in a gorgeous underwater environment – in which you look for interactive hotspots, such as a school of seahorses that twirl and emit musical notes as you rub the game's ad hoc cursor over them. Performance sequences, meanwhile, involve playing along to the game's 25 licensed tracks in a manner distinct from playing instruments or performing dance moves in Harmonix's other games. The three performance gestures Harmonix let us sample – wiping and tracing along with some notes and pushing our hands outwards in time with others – still felt like beat-matching

in time with the music, but they also felt appropriately wizardly, as if you're swooshing your hands around in a spellcasting flurry.

During each track, you have opportunities to remix the song to your liking. At various key moments during, say, Fun's *Some Nights*, you can swoop your hand in one of three directions to pick one of three instruments (including audio) to hone

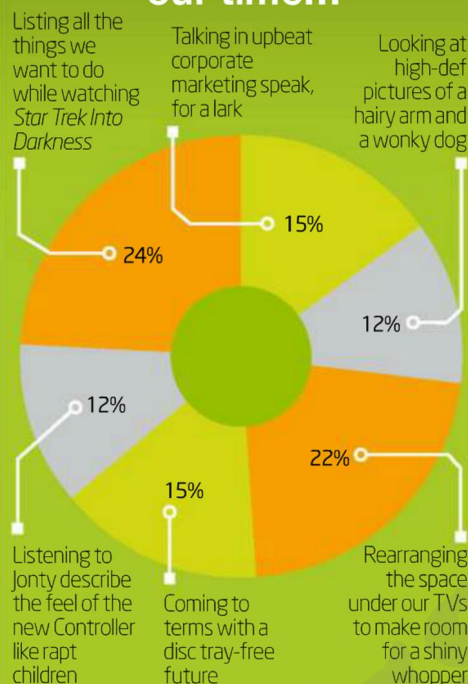
in on. Choose piano, for example, and the next 30 seconds of the song will emphasise that element, altering which gestures you need to perform accordingly.

From everything we've seen so far, *Fantasia* is a departure for Harmonix – an experience unlike any it's yet provided, while clearly exploiting its expertise at making accessible music games. The studio hasn't revealed whether it's for the Xbox 360 or Xbox One, but it would suit both.



Perform songs to earn lots of lovely magic.

How we've filled our time...



What's been on our Xbox 360



DEFIANCE DLC: NEW DETAILS

With a million registered players, *Defiance* isn't the washout we feared it'd be – and Trion has outlined a mixed plan for DLC. There's free content, a \$10 paid upgrade with a new species, mission lines, arenas, and microtransactional shop items for cosmetic tints and stat boosts.

Defiance defiantly proving popular.



THE ODDWORLD HERO WE NEVER MET

Talking to *Oddworld*'s gatekeeper, Just Add Water, we found out about a game that might still be made: *The Brutal Ballad of Fangus Klot*. Fangus is a shepherd who's forced into a life of pit fighting by an invading force, while battling a rabies-like disease. Intriguing, if a bit morbid.

Wolfenstein: The New Order

The sixties wouldn't have been so swinging with giant metal Nazis

FIRST LOOK

BJ Blazkowicz. He's been killing Nazis for 32 years, and robotic Nazis since Hitler's head in a

jar first perched atop a mech in 1992, effortlessly inventing 3D shooters as he mini-gunned his way into our hearts. So when Disney acolyte Warren Spector took to Facebook to say "do we need a generically dark, monochromatic FPS kill-the-Nazi-giant-robot game?", perhaps he should consider shushing up. *Wolfenstein* is THE kill-the-Nazi-giant-robot game.

Blazkowicz wasn't a witness to the fall of Europe to the Third Reich. He didn't see the looming Nazi edifices appear next to the key landmarks across the continent. He's been out of the picture for 15 years, having washed up without any memories on the shores of the Baltic Sea, and withered in an asylum. It's only when a troop of Nazis storm the asylum to purge the burden of the mentally ill, that Blazkowicz's memories begin to return. That was their first mistake. (Actually, succumbing to the ideology of racial purity, totalitarianism, and hate was their first mistake, but this is the one they'll actually regret.)

Nazi fiction has produced some of the most compelling, psychotic criminals.

Frau Engel is the New Order's sexualised equivalent of *Inglourious Basterds*' floor-shooting Hans Landa. Revelling in her power over everyone around her, and indulging her inferiors with a pinch of flirting, she's every inch the despicable right-wing villain, and your interactions with her are suitably intense.

Forgotten war

Amnesia gives Blazkowicz a chance to ask the questions the player wants the answer to, so as we get a cab through occupied London, the story of the UK's downfall is told, along with hints of resistance. We're introduced to the hulking black fortress that we'll be infiltrating – although "infiltrate" might be a bit too classy for his action-hero stylings. "Exploderising" is more like it, especially once you've raided a Nazi lab, and got your hands on some sweet experimental laser tech.

The last *Wolfenstein* wasn't everything we hoped, although it had its moments. With a new developer, a new engine, a new era and good old Blazkowicz in the saddle, we're looking forward to seeing more about where this big steel beast is headed.

ONE-MAN ARMY

Bethesda is cementing its reputation as the publisher that 'gets' single-player. The New Order will not feature co-op or competitive multiplayer, nor anything else that usually follows the phrase 'tacked-on'. However, there's no word yet on how linear this'll be. The 2009 *Wolfenstein* felt at times like there was a hint of open-world action waiting to come out.



He always gets like this when he's drunk.



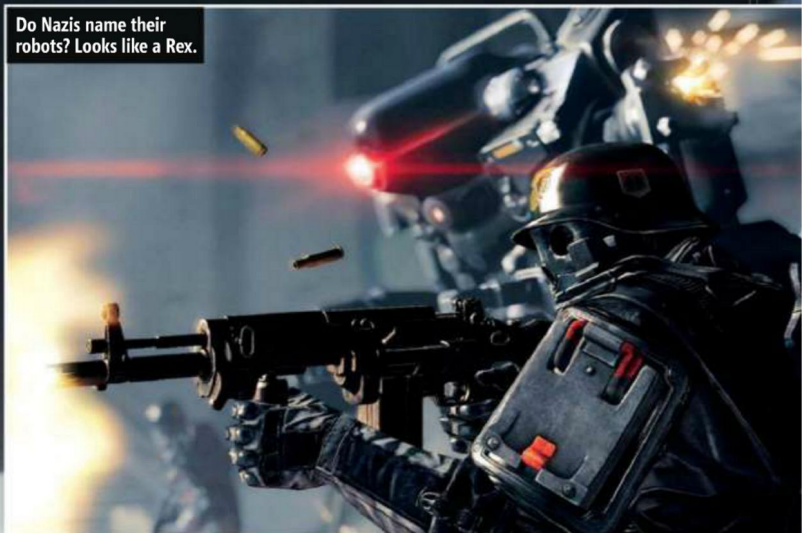
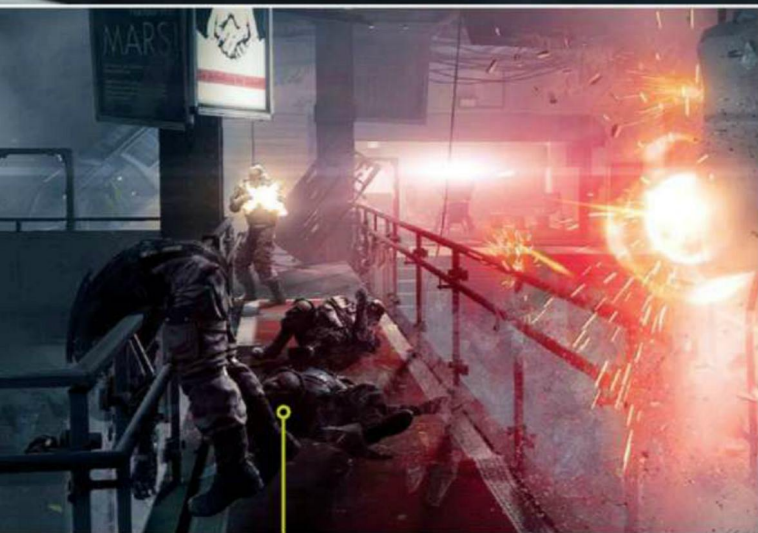
Art from the pit-fighting rabies game.

MONACO WASN'T ALWAYS ABOUT CO-OP

Class-based heist roguelike *Monaco* comes alive in co-op. But during a Reddit AMA, dev Andy Schatz confirmed that competitive heists were removed for release, because the maps didn't suit them. If that means more maps and modes for DLC, we're happy to fork over more cash.



Competitive *Monaco* may be on the cards.



Do Nazis name their robots? Looks like a Rex.

FIVE IS ALIVE

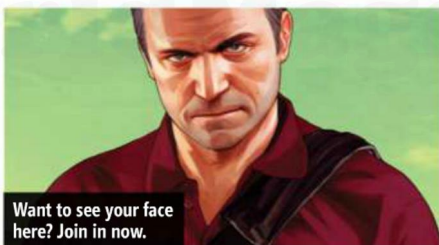
id Tech 5 is the engine driving *Wolfenstein*, and there have been a few refinements since the buttery-smooth but rough-textured *RAGE*. Because *Wolfenstein* will be a current and next-gen release, we can really start looking forward to seeing what it can do. Whatever happens, these are going to be some of the best-looking Nazi robots around.

"BJ's been out of the picture for 15 years, withering in an asylum suffering from amnesia"



GET YOUR FACE IN GTAV

The only good cult is a spoof cult, and Rockstar's Epsilon Program is now accepting new members. Of the people who sign up, five will be chosen as the faces of the evangelical church that seeks to "free you from thought". Join at epsilonprogram.com.



EA DROPS ONLINE PASS

EA's much-hated Online Pass is no more. "None of our new titles will include that feature," confirmed senior director of corporate communications John Reseburg, "We've listened to the feedback and have decided to do away with it moving forward."

STAT ATTACK

Number cruncher

The world of gaming reproduced in statistical form



200,000

Number of copies of *Fez* sold on Xbox Live Arcade.

56%

The increase in sales seen by Microsoft's Entertainment and Devices Division last year. Not bad.

£19.4m

Capcom's revised and then revised again profit forecast for the financial year.

46m

The current population of Xbox Live.



878,000

The number of units *BioShock Infinite* sold in stores in March.



10%

The decline in US game sales in March, despite *Infinite*'s best efforts.



2,300,000

Lifetime sales for *Dark Souls* since it was first released in October 2011.



The news we've all been waiting for.

DYACK "SORRY" FOR X-MEN: DESTINY

Ex-Silicon Knights chief Denis Dyack has apologised for *X-Men: Destiny*, amid allegations the studio cut corners to focus on other games. "We are sorry how that game turned out," he grovelled. "We did nothing but put our best efforts into this project."



Dyack's apology was all too much for one gamer.

HANDHELD HALO

Spartans on the move

Halo goes mobile with new, twin-stick-style shooter

The latest *Halo* game isn't debuting on an Xbox. It's not even a first-person shooter. 343 Industries' *Halo: Spartan Assault* will see the touchscreen shooter appear on Windows 8 tablets and phones in July.

Spartan Assault is less of a fully-fledged instalment of the core *Halo* series and more of a quirky riff on the lore-expanding experiment that was *Spartan Ops*, *Halo 4*'s co-op episodic campaign. It tells the story of the very Spartan Op which launched Spartan squad leader Sarah Palmer's career, told as a top-down arcade shooter with twin-stick-style controls: your left thumb controls your character's movement, while your right determines the direction of your gunfire. A small menu along the bottom-left of the

screen lets you swap your loadout, armour abilities and grenade type. As a *Halo* game, you'll have access to all the UNSC, Covenant and Promethean weapons you'd expect, and travel with AI-controlled Spartans.

Portable ops

Fans of vehicular combat and *Halo* sandbox-style gameplay won't be disappointed either. Scenes include a Wraith scuffle against Covvie forces and Needler-packing showdowns against Covenant Elite soldiers. Executive producer Dan Ayoub says the game is a "simulation/training tool" for newbie Spartans aboard the UNSC Infinity (just like *Halo 4*'s multiplayer mode); combat scenarios recreate many set-pieces from the main series.

Despite aiming at mobile devices, detail and vibrancy is crammed into *Spartan Assault*'s visuals – which we played on a Microsoft Surface – while cinematics expand the narrative. The demo's cutscenes were comparable to the CGI intros of every new Spartan Ops chapter.

Spartan Assault will encourage *Halo* fans to switch to a Win8 phone or tablet; but this is a twin-stick shooter, so expect an Xbox release too.



"I thought I'd shoot my way out...."

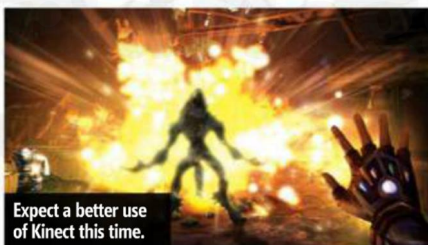


How will Halo's vehicle physics translate?

WorldMags.net

LIONHEAD DROPS FABLE 4 CLUES

Could *Fable* be in for a next-gen reboot? Lionhead has recently advertised for two positions, including a core engine programmer familiar with Unreal Engine 3 or 4 and animation director with experience "reimagining existing franchises". Word is it's a cloud-based game.



AVALANCHE SHELVES STEAMPUNK TITLE

Remember when Avalanche CEO Christopher Sundberg tweeted a mysterious image that looked a bit like a new *Just Cause* earlier this year? No? Great! The game's been cancelled anyway. The images were from a "steampunk-style game we had in development that we put on ice."



Is this the last console you'll ever buy?

Will the Xbox One forever satisfy your gaming needs?

YES!

All the updates can happen online
Jonty



There are a lot of smart ideas behind the new Xbox, but one of the smartest is the lifespan. The Xbox 360 was built for the previous age, when consoles lasted for three to five years, apps were basically non-existent and games were sold on disc, and its lifespan was extended by increasingly elaborate software updates that pushed its ageing hardware far beyond its intended limits. Microsoft has built the updates into the back end with Xbox One: the console itself is a front-end fed by the vast cloud computing system of Xbox Live. Software - be it games, apps, entertainment or all three - can be distributed centrally, and platform updates can magically appear without you seeing a single loading bar. Microsoft can rebuild the platform overnight, and it'll be ready for you in the morning. Sure, the basic hardware will date, but cloud computing offers near-limitless potential - and as broadband connections are only going to get better, by the time the Xbox One starts to look like it's running low on horsepower or storage space, you'll be able to hand the job off to the Xbox Live servers rather than having to upgrade. I might splash out on a nicer, slimmer, smaller model in the meantime - got to keep the techy credentials up-to-date, after all - but the platform itself could last forever. Or at least until we discover that you need a new port for the neural interface.



NO!

Cloud computing won't last forever
Edwin



This cloud computing lark does indeed sound jolly exciting, but I must first address the notion that it's "near-limitless power". There's no such thing as "near-limitless". That's what we in the old journalism trade call a "contradiction in terms". I dare say some of those Goldman Sachs bankers thought the stock market's growth curve was "near-limitless", till the entire US housing industry rolled off the top of it. There will be limits, and at some point Xbox One is going to reach them.

That aside, saying that the hardware need never change is the sort of thinking that lead to those historic proclamations that the world would only need five computers. Of course the hardware's going to change: at the very least there's going to be a smaller version (Xbox 0.5?) with a bigger hard drive, and more elaborate new additions will sprout like Kinect and Xbox Live did on Xbox 360. The fact that heavy lifting is being done on Xbox Live almost makes it easier to update the box itself: if the hard sums are being done online, then the console is just there to make things shinier, and thus more prone to modular updates.

If nothing else, you shouldn't underestimate the enthusiasm people have for new and shiny things. Apple, the prince of the connected age, has done good business selling slicker versions of the same hardware for year upon year; who's to say that Microsoft won't follow suit?

Agree? Disagree? Leave a comment on this article at oxm.co.uk

WorldMags.net

YOUR MOST WANTED

Alan Wake 2

Sequel is a no-show, but all is not lost

When Remedy Entertainment was name-checked on stage at the Xbox One reveal event in Redmond, most fans watching expected the long-awaited *Alan Wake* sequel to finally be revealed. Sadly, this wasn't the case, although the game we got instead - *Quantum Break* - looks mightily intriguing. Not long after the Xbox One event, Remedy's creative director, Sam Lake, tweeted confirmation that its next game would not be *Alan Wake 2*. However, a YouTube video from Remedy followed a few days later, in which Lake stated that though its beloved IP is on ice for the time being, it "definitely" wants to keep working towards a sequel. "We knew from the beginning that when *Wake* ends up in the dark place, getting out of there is going to be a long, hellish journey and a hard struggle. And I guess where we are now is fiction becoming reality." Here's hoping *Wake* won't be in the dark place for too much longer.

SidTheSloth

There's some hint of a decent/weird story that may be worth a sniff, but jury's out until I see/hear more. Dev has pedigree which often makes me/others likely to be receptive... I think!

CunningSmile

Really gutted about *Alan Wake 2*. I thought for sure the *AW* sale on the Marketplace was a sign.

Tell us what you think! Tell us your Most Wanted Xbox One games at www.oxm.co.uk

Wadium_Arcadium

They reduced all the *Alan Wake* stuff on the Marketplace yesterday so I was sure another *Alan Wake* was on the way. It's far too early to say too much on *Quantum Break* but the ideas behind it certainly looked interesting.

RUMOUR & SPECULATION

INSIDER GOSSIP ROUNDED UP

Thanks to a Twitter blunder by Batman voice actor Kevin Conroy, speculation is rife that a fourth *Arkham* game is secretly in production.



Microsoft has said that a "historic" Rare franchise will be announced for Xbox One at E3.



A job listing spotted on the online CV of a senior concept artist suggests that Visceral Games has an Xbox One shooter in the works.



A brief image at the Xbox One event suggested a new *Crackdown*.

After drifting into production limbo, *Prey 2* may be resurrected later this year.



Messages

YOUR OPPORTUNITY TO POST OPINION ON ANYTHING AND EVERYTHING XBOX 360



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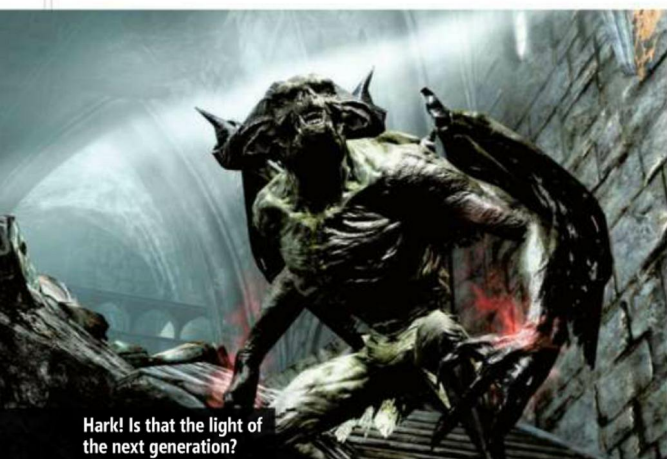
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youtube.com/officialxboxmag

Welcome

It's our birthday and no one sent cake. Fine. We haven't had time to sulk: we've one eye on the future of Xbox, sniffing out facts with our news nose, and the other on our illustrious past. Wait, that leaves our mouth free. Free to eat the cakes you didn't send. You monsters.



Hark! Is that the light of the next generation?

NEXT-GEN BLUES

I am getting the impression that the Xbox's offline community is being forgotten about and left to die. With the next Xbox console only working if you have Xbox Live, and second-hand games not playable, and more and more games needing you to have Xbox Live to access content, it is clear that the offline community is not needed nor wanted. Also, the price of Xbox Live will rise, because natural resources are running out. *Skyrim* was the best ever game for us offline players as its endless quest, huge world and unlimited amount of entertainment was a godsend. I hope this letter was an eye opener. Keep up the really good job you're doing, and Log, keep up the effort with Nike+.

Chris Arbon

*And offline *Skyrim* players will be pleased to hear that the DLC has all been bundled on a disc, so that's more endless stuff for you. As far as the new Xbox is concerned, it's still a bit*

uncertain - but while Microsoft is building it to be online, it can cope with being off it, and the price is remaining unchanged. As for Log, he's still dwindling. He's lost two stone now, and won't stop singing songs about how elegant he is.

SOMETIMES ONLINE

Always online DRM isn't a good idea. *SimCity* and *Diablo 3* on PC have shown us that servers get flooded, and people can't play the games that they lined up for. Why do developers do this? To stop a small minority of gamers stealing their games? Why should Xbox gamers, some of whom can't get online, have to deal with this? Why aren't we being treated like customers? OXM, you've been a shining paragon, always giving me some reason to allay my worries. My question is this: why might the next Xbox have an Always Online DRM?

Owen Piper

*Bit of a tricky one, this. Microsoft hasn't mentioned any DRM element to Xbox One's online-ness: it says that mandating an internet connection means that developers can build more interesting online features and use cloud computing, which is reasonable enough: if developers don't have to worry about protracted offline periods, then they can do more elaborate things. As it works offline - and given Microsoft's good track record keeping Xbox Live up - it shouldn't suffer a *SimCity*-style failure. It will have some*



Get your face up close, have a read.

impact on things like second-hand games, but we don't know what, yet. Microsoft has only said that it'll continue to support used game sales. More next issue.

THE LETTER THE BETTER

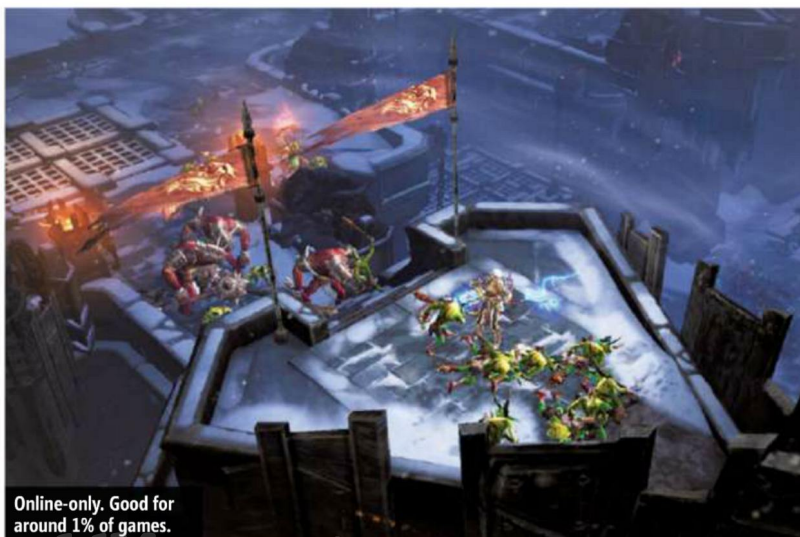
I have to give you props for the letters page - there's been a little improvement made. Just curious - have you considered removing a whole page dedicated to an advert once in a while and instead extending this with the letters and comments. This would give other people a chance to have their letters printed, while giving the readers of the magazine more letters to read. Once again great work on the letters page and looking forward to more in the future

Gareth Wilmer

If it was up to me, the semi-anonymous voice of the magazine, the whole magazine would be letters. But hang on a minute - is a letters page improved by printing a letter saying how the letters page has improved? Or have we just succumbed to fatal quality-killing hubris, and finally jumped the

"Offline Xbox players are being left to die"

Not true, read on for all the facts



Online-only. Good for around 1% of games.



Should I buy *Tomb Raider* or wait for something better?
EKUL 5853

Buy it. You can get it for £23 at the moment.

CUD U SEND ME A FREND REQUEST
Withheld

We're sorry, could you shout a bit louder please?

I subscribed to OXM!
JohnShepardN7ME

Sir, you have done a good and important thing. We love you.

Can I have a Margherita pizza with... damn, wrong address!
Smokin Skull64

The Pizza Hut app's only available in America, too. Sigh.



Should the next Xbox be backward compatible?

A lot of people have spent a lot of money on Xbox 360 games. For it all to become suddenly unplayable is not cool,
Darth Mousemat

I don't see the point with backwards compatibility. It's not like my Xbox 360 is suddenly going to stop working.

DGR1980

Should it? Yes, it should do everything, ideally. Do we need it? Not really. Will it? No-one knows.

Bezza89

I'm in the "would like backwards compatibility" camp but I still recognise it's a luxury, not a necessity.

PonderingWalrus

I'm just going to keep my Xbox 360, as it plays my original Xbox games, which I've got more of than 360 games.

TomAZ600



letter shark? Oh God. We've peaked on Issue 100. It's all downhill from here. Abandon magazine!

OVERSKILLED, UNDERAGE

Like Charlie Ray in Issue 97, I am 12. Unlike him, I'm allowed to play 'inappropriate games'. In Issue 97 I read a lot of complaints about under-age gamers, and how all we do is play *CoD* and swear at people. This is not always the case. I sometimes play *CoD*, but I prefer more open games, like *Just Cause*, *Saints Row*, *Assassin's Creed*, *GTA*, *Red Dead*, *Skyrim*. I can see these games weren't made for kids (a certain dildo bat springs to mind). Some young gamers are ignorant and make too many "your mum" jokes, but we're not all like that. I can play these games because I've proved I am mature enough for them. Don't blame us for what only a few of us do.

William Rymer

Here's an idea: replace PEGI with an individual gamer's licence. If you can demonstrate an ability to lose a multiplayer match without accusing anyone of cheating, you get a 15-in-real-terms certificate. If you can show that you won't shoot people in real life, and realise that the swear words you learn from 'mature' games should only



Stupid place to build a village, really.

be used around people your own age (and adults who seem cool) then you get a PEGI 18 licence. The administrative costs would be prohibitive, the system would be unworkable, but my god, it would get more 12 year olds writing in and solemnly using the phrase "dildo bat". And if that isn't a worthy aspiration, we don't know what is.

BUSY BOYS

I have been meaning to write this letter for an age, but with two young kids it's difficult to find the time. That's



"I love playing *CoD*'cos it's so convenient"

It takes all kinds



PRIZE!

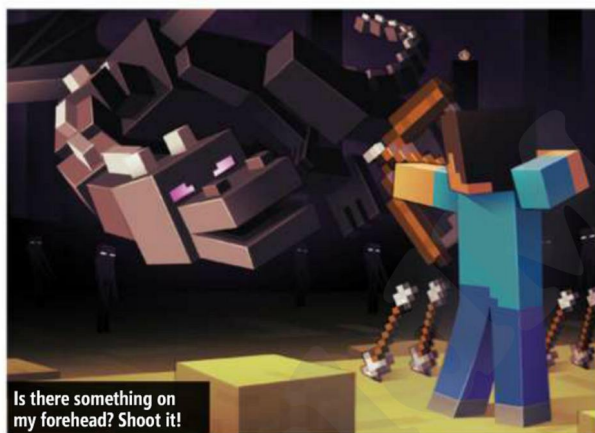
For writing this month's Star Letter, James wins a game from under the pile of out-of-date magazines on OXM Jonty's desk.

BORING THE EARTH

Initially, I was genuinely enjoying *Minecraft*. But with these 'new' updates I'm starting to become a bit sceptical. I know it remains a very popular game, despite the repetitive updates, which are really more of the same. As you said yourselves - where is *Minecraft* even going? It needs to re-invent itself to keep its avid fans interested.

James

Minecraft blurs the line between toy and game. It started off like a toy with vague pretences of being a game. But when Creative mode came out, it gave everyone a chance to mess about with the joy of building blocks without having to worry about game-like rubbish like "resources". Over the last few updates, it's been striding confidently back into gameland, with levelling up and dragon bosses. Personal opinions will differ, but we think *Minecraft* is at its best as a creative kit,



Is there something on my forehead? Shoot it!

where you can show off what you've built and enjoy the worlds that other people have crafted. Building portals and killing dragons? That's not as cool as pork chops falling out of the sky when you stand on a pressure plate. Incidentally, as we celebrate our 100th issue this month, *Minecraft* celebrated its first birthday in May. We reckon it's got a great chance of still being as popular in another year's time.

TWITTER

@oxmuk

I wondered if there would be a rebirth of *Destruction Derby* on the new console?

@BiggerThanLook

We haven't heard anything. You've always got *DIRT* in the meantime.

Microsoft should bring pre-owned to Xbox Live, not block it with Xbox 720.

@ZeVinSyl

Nice idea in theory. But we suspect it won't happen.

Saints Row is getting over the top now! *Saints Row IV* sounds ridiculous!

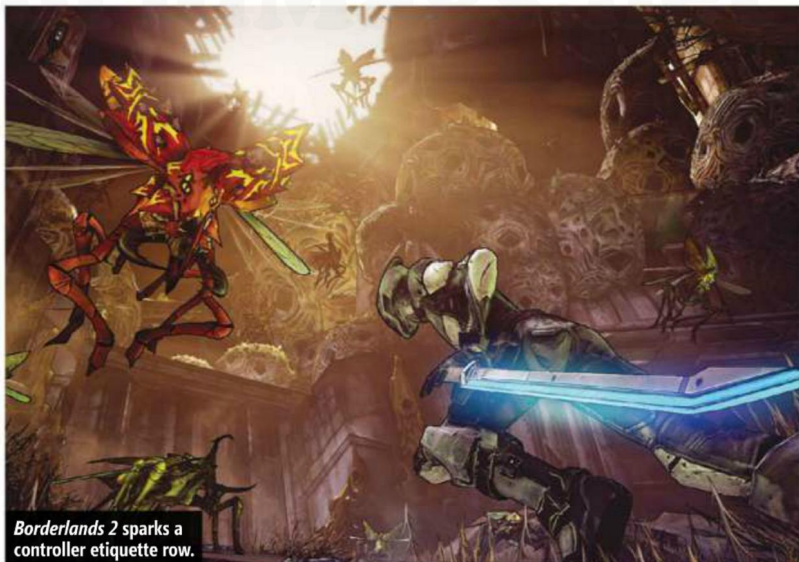
@mintyrigden

Au contraire. In our opinion it should be set on the rings of Saturn.

I said the launch announcement was at 5pm GMT because of @OXMUK, but it's at 6pm! Damn you!

@MCXBLANews

It was at 5pm GMT. But GMT doesn't have the extra Summertime hour added onto it. Silly system.



Borderlands 2 sparks a controller etiquette row.

the reason I play *Call of Duty* so much – time. I can put *CoD* on, play for 15-20 minutes, then if one of the kids needs attention, I can just walk away. 90 per cent of the time I play it with the volume turned down so I can keep an ear out for the little guys. That's the beauty of the game – it's quick to start, and you don't really have to pay attention to what's going on. It's really convenient to just walk away at any time, if needed. (I know, a load of people will hate me for that.) I love games and have played them for over 20 years now. It's in my blood, and something the wife has to deal with. But with the increasing complexity of titles and stories, it's difficult to stay focused when you

have to keep an eye on your kids who seem to be everywhere at once.

Richard Littlehales

We're not sure Activision will thank you for your description of CoD as a game that you can ignore. Mind, it does show that different people want different things from games – we're not all after the biggest, most important storyline in the world, or the most engrossing strategy. And while we admire your dedication to your kids, can we suggest you stick to games with big teams? Steer clear of God mode on XBLA, anyway – we've had a few rounds ruined by one absent fool who used up the life pot by just standing there. But anyway, we've got a far more pressing matter of gaming etiquette going on this month – and here it is...

CROTCH PAD

My lovely partner took a break from our *Borderlands 2* session, and placed her custom Xbox controller on my lap. This horrified our daughter, as she thought leaving your controller on someone else's lap was bad manners. My girlfriend asserted that it was my lap – not my groin – so it was completely in keeping with gaming etiquette. This caused a rather lively debate (I live in a household of geeks) about etiquette when it comes to leaving a controller with someone. Our children think in-hand or on the sofa. My partner and I think that we don't want someone else's hands on our modded controllers and leaving them where someone's ass has just been isn't right. Can you help with this important matter? What is acceptable with controller etiquette?

Avern

"When it comes to controller etiquette, what is acceptable?"

Avoid the crotch and you'll be fine



facebook.com/oxmuk



Re: New Xbox hype

I cannot wait. Seriously, whatever. Just bring it on.

Neil Young

I have a feeling the new Xbox is going to outshine the PS4...

Vincent Lyons

Noooo! No! No! No! I just got my Xbox for Christmas. I was told that the Xbox 360 would last until 2015! **Kyle Archib** It will last until 2015 – if not later. There are millions of Xbox 360s out there. They won't just disappear.

I think *Watch Dogs* won't be all it can be on current gen. I'm holding out until next year.

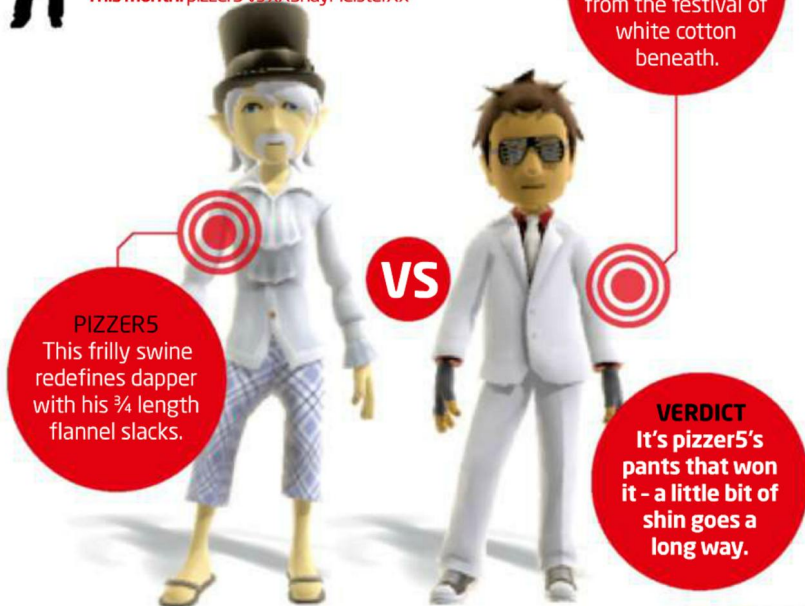
Matthew Howse



FASHION SHOWDOWN

AVATAR STYLE FACE-OFF

This month: pizzer5 vs xXShayMeisterXx



WANT TO BE JUDGED? SEND IN YOUR GAMERTAG



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OXM Log

THE WINNING AVATAR EARNS A FREE XBOX 360 GAME

Actual game depends upon what's in OXM Jonty's drawer!



"I hear so many rumours, but what does the future hold for *Call of Duty*?" Ghosts. Read more on p38



They never trained you how to love, did they?

This is a very serious question for the modern connected age, and we're glad you came to us with it. I just sneaked around to Edwin's desk and slipped a controller onto his leg. He looked confused, as it wasn't connected to anything, but he wasn't offended. We then quickly reached a unanimous decision that the thigh is acceptable, so long as it's at least three inches from the filthy zone. Aoife added that if you've got really sweaty palms, it's polite to wipe it first, which just goes to show what a genteel lady she is. We agree that putting it on the sofa is completely over-formal, but hand-to-hand is okay. In no circumstances fill your mouth with milk, jam half the controller in there, then lean over and drop the controller and milk into your friend's lap. I tried that with Jonty when he got back from the Xbox event and he wasn't best pleased.

COD FORWARD

What does the future hold for *Call of Duty*? I hear so many rumours and stories about *Modern Warfare 4* being the last of the *Modern Warfare* series. And people talking about rumours of Activision having three new *Call of Duty* titles: 'Space Warfare', 'Future Warfare' and 'Secret Warfare'. I'm tired of hearing these rumours and stories, as in my eyes *Call of Duty* is the bestest game in the world and nothing can ever be better than that. So can someone give me some answers please to what *Call of Duty* holds for us in the future.

Arron Cooper

You missed out *Call of Duty: Advanced Warfare*. And *Call of Duty: Thunderguns Warfare*. And *Call of Duty: Grraarrrrrgh*. And the last one, which is actually going to happen: *Call of Duty: Ghosts*. You can read more about that on page 38. Alternatively, the latest from the original CoD team will be at £3.



Center Parcs has changed since we last went.



Contact information

2 Balcombe Street, London, NW1 6NW
Tel: 020 7042 4680 Fax: 020 7042 4689 www.oxm.co.uk

Editorial Team

Editor: Jon Hicks
jon.hicks@futurenet.com (Gamertag: OXM Jonty)
Deputy Editor: Edwin Evans-Thirlwell
(Gamertag: OXM ETBoy) edwin.evans-thirlwell@futurenet.com
Associate Editor: Jon Blyth
jon.blyth@futurenet.com (Gamertag: OXM Log)
Staff Writer: Aoife Wilson
aoife.wilson@futurenet.com (Gamertag: OXM Aoife)
Art Editor: Curtis Phillips-Cozier
curtis.phillipscozier@futurenet.com (Gamertag: OXM D Coziee)
Deputy Art Editor: John Finbow
john.finbow@futurenet.com (Gamertag: OXM Roll n Go)
Production Editor: Jenny Meade
jennifer.meade@futurenet.com (Gamertag: OXM RockOn)

Digital Team

Disc Production Manager: Scott Gilchrist scott.gilchrist@futurenet.com
Developer: Anthony Willcox anthony.willcox@futurenet.com
London Studio Production Assistant: Adrienn Major adrienn.major@futurenet.com
Video producer: Gavin Murphy gavin.murphy@futurenet.com
Technical Manager (Online): Kornel Lambert kornel.lambert@futurenet.com
Technical Support Assistant (Online): Andrew Taylor andrew.taylor@futurenet.com
Digital Designer: Luc Pestille luc.pestille@futurenet.com

Contributors

Writing: Craig Owens, Matthew Pellett, Alex Dale, Alex Wiltshire, Francesca Reyes, Corey Cohen, Matt Cabral, Taylor Cocke, Sam White
Design: John Woolford **Subbing:** Jonathan Todd

Advertising and marketing

London Ad-Sales Director: James Ranson (0207 042 4163) james.ranson@futurenet.com
Sales Director: Nick Weatherall (0207 042 4155) nick.weatherall@futurenet.com
Digital Advertising Manager: Andrew Church (0207 042 4237) andrew.church@futurenet.com
Trade Marketing Manager: Colin Hornby
Senior Product Manager, Subscriptions: Adam Jones
International Licensing Director: Regina Erak
Group Marketing Manager: Sam Wright
Senior Marketing Executive: Tilly Michell
Marketing Executive: Antonella Matia

Rights

Rights & Asset Management Director: Katherine Bebbington-Taylor

Production

Production Manager: Mark Constance
Production Co-ordinator: Marie Quilter

Senior Editorial

Group Senior Editor, Games: Tim Clark
Group Art Director, Games: Graham Dalzell

Management

Publisher: Richard Keith
Head of Entertainment: Clair Porteous
Group Publishing Director: Nial Ferguson

Distribution

Seymour Distribution Ltd, 2 East Poultry Avenue, London, EC1A 9PT (020 7429 4000)

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Chief executive: Mark Wood
Non-executive chairman: Peter Allen
Chief financial officer: Graham Harding
Tel +44 (0)207 042 4000 (London)
Tel +44 (0)1225 442 244 (Bath)

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ONE TO RULE THEM ALL

Eight years after it revealed Xbox 360, Microsoft has finally uncovered its replacement: Xbox One. It's eight times more powerful, exponentially more capable, and has almost unlimited processing power on tap. And it's not just going to make games shinier: it's going to change how you play forever.

Welcome to a new way of thinking about videogames. In following the Xbox 360, Microsoft hasn't just done a straight upgrade to the increasingly geriatric silicon. It's thought through how the games industry is changing, and will continue to change, and built something that, in the words of division head Don Matrick, will last the next ten years.

That means it's not just about coming up with higher-definition shooters (although those are represented) or improving the pad design (although it has) or rolling out lots of exclusive games (although it will be). It's about thinking about how you play games, how you communicate, and how you socialise, in an age when the internet is becoming ubiquitous, kids play *Angry Birds* before they can walk, and people use TV and Twitter simultaneously.

Between Microsoft's 21 May reveal and our behind-closed-doors interviews with key members of the team, we've seen more of the new console, the new games and the new Xbox Live than anyone else. Some details are still being nailed down, and will be released this week at E3 or later in the year, but this is the most detailed writeup anywhere.

LIQUID GLOSS

The new system has been designed to roll with the big home-entertainment dogs. The main finish is described as "liquid black", and is a glossier version of the early Xbox 360 Slim designs. The main console is exactly half-and-half liquid black and cooling grille, a design that's repeated on the power brick (about the same size as the 360 S model) and the updated Xbox Live interface. It's designed to be laid horizontally, not propped upright like the Xbox 360.

The hardware

"Understated", "elegant", and "even a little plain" are how we'd describe the looks of the Xbox One. On the outside, the rectangular box – about the size of an Xbox 360 (except it's narrower and taller) – looks a bit more like an entertainment device than a game console, with a sleek black exterior that's a mix of glossy and black finishes. Two flat, touch-sensitive switches on the front turn it on and off and operate the disc drive, while the almost imperceptible controller-sync button is subtly placed on the left side of the console.

Roughly half of the exterior plating atop the console is bladed, to allow air flow and cooling for the circuitry and heatsink below. Peek *inside* the console (as Microsoft allowed us to do), and you'll see a large fan directly atop that heatsink. The company's taken great care to avoid the Xbox 360's overheating problems and its famed noise level. Trust us when we say the new system makes even less sound than an Xbox 360 Slim running an installed game; we actually listened to the Xbox One in a soundproofed room, and its minuscule noise level is startling.

Inside, it's a significant upgrade to the Xbox 360. "In the 360 we had 500 million transistors that did CPU and GPU compute, and in this generation we have five billion transistors," says hardware boss Todd Holmdahl. There's 16 times as much RAM, too, although it's been carefully split

between a dedicated game-exclusive section and a multipurpose app section – the better to enable instant startup and instant switching between games and programs.

Kinect has had a comparably dramatic makeover – more on that shortly – and the much-loved controller has also been brought up to date. It's a subtle improvement, because Microsoft is well aware of how popular the original is, but significant. As you'll see over the page, updated rumble tech and a smoother design should keep people happy – there's also a new data port where the old headphone jack used to be, although Microsoft hasn't yet revealed what this will be used for.

Prime mover

The revamp Kinect has received should dwarf those controller enhancements, though. While we didn't get to personally test the new motion-control device (which will come bundled with every new Xbox), Microsoft gave us a tech demo of some of its new features, and they seem impressive.

One of the most obvious new aspects is Kinect's ability to automatically identify each person in a household as they walk in the room, and then instantly bring up their entertainment experience of choice (be it a TV show, a movie, a game and so on) on the TV screen. That function alone feels very next-gen and could go a long way toward making gamers feel "connected" to their console – although some of the improvements to the





SPECS APPEAL

HOW THE XBOX 360 AND XBOX ONE COMPARE



	XBOX ONE	XBOX 360
CPU:	8-core AMD	3-core PowerPC
RAM:	8GB	512MB
HARD DRIVE:	500GB	512MB-250GB
DISCS:	40GB Blu-ray/DVD/CD	7.8GB DVD
WIRED CONNECTION:	1,000Mb/s	1Mb/s
WIRELESS CONNECTION:	1x 802.11b/g/n	3x 802.11n
CONNECTIVITY:	Three USB3 ports	Three USB2.0 ports
DISPLAY OUTPUT:	HDMI	HDMI/composite/component
MAX DISPLAY RESOLUTION:	4K (3840x 2160)	1080p (1920x1080)
SOUND OUTPUT:	7.1 surround	5.1 surround

device's performance are arguably more key to its long-term appeal. As we saw in our demo, Kinect 2.0 has a much wider field of view, making it much easier for the device to read multiple players simultaneously – handy for a six-player game like *Kinect Party*. Better yet, this wider field of view means you'll be able to use Kinect 2.0 in a smaller playspace than currently suggested for first-generation Kinect (six-plus feet from the TV and six feet wide), although Microsoft hasn't divulged these new specs.

Improved skeletal tracking means the new Kinect will detect hand gestures and facial expressions more precisely – something we saw in our tech demo, as the device clearly recognised individual fingers, the subject's ponytail, their facial

“This console has been designed to last the next ten years”

SPACE ODDITY

When you put a disc in the Xbox One, it's automatically installed to the 500GB hard drive, although you can start playing while it's copying over. Things like game saves and Achievements are saved locally and synchronised to the cloud when possible – if you need more space locally you can plug a hard drive into the USB port.

RING OUT

Farewell, ring of light and red ring of death. Now there's only a single white light behind the Xbox logo, to give that glossy home-entertainment look. There aren't even any USB ports to disfigure the front; there's one on the side and two more around the back.



XBOX PRESIDENT DON MATTRICK SEES THE FUTURE

What was the big idea behind Xbox One? Imagine you're designing something for the next ten years. What trends are going on in the world? What are we learning about how consumers are using things? How are things going to innovate? We know we have to keep pace with all of the opportunities that will be presented, in TV, in gaming, with connections to your device, with music, with personalisation, with innovation in content delivery. How will people expect things to be? They'll probably expect that every time they use something it gets smarter, it gets better.

Do you worry you're going to put off core gamers?

The people who are really vocal about that are also the people who want us to innovate. Do you really want something that is just exclusively living in a game silo and ignores the web? Do you really want something that doesn't access a community? Do you really want something that doesn't allow you to see the very best experiences? I think of myself as a core gamer. I've been doing this since 1979. I wrote games, I spent 25 years at EA, driving the studio, and I think people want excellence. They want things that allow them to go on the kind of journey that great storytellers, artists, technologists are trying to take people on. Our box fully delivers in that area. I think we'll have an amazing core games box, and we're trying to present a vision for where the world's going over the next decade. What people really want is for companies to deliver more value than they paid for, to be respectful of the things they really love, and to surprise and delight people with new innovations. That's what we're trying to create.

Are exclusives more important for this than previous consoles?

I think they're always important. Looking at the number of exclusives and the deals that we have, I think people are, candidly, way, way under-indexing how we're punching. We're going to come out with detail on things and people are going to go, 'oh my god, they made this a core activity'. There are great hits, there's new innovation, and here are world-class creators plugged in. There's a lot of hyperbole about things. I think we're actually going to deliver.

expression (neutral, happy, and so on) and whether they were engaged in the TV or talking on the phone. (As a quick practical example, a Microsoft rep noted that they've had particular success with demos simulating fitness games, as the new Kinect can better tell if you're doing exercises correctly or cheating.) Furthermore, the camera captures video at 1080p, meaning a sharper onscreen image for both you and a friend, should you take advantage of the new picture-in-picture Skype conversations. Headsets are great and all, but video-chatting with a pal while you're playing a game or watching a program – yep, you can do both at the same time; you won't need to pause one – feels like a whole new level of communication.

Oh, and two more pieces of awesomeness. With four separate mics lined up in a horizontal array, the new Kinect will have significantly enhanced voice recognition. Most interesting of all, perhaps, is that the new active-infrared tech that gives Kinect 2.0 a clearer image and better detects your movements, also allows the device to be fully light-independent. No more adjusting the lighting in your room to make Kinect games look or perform better; now it doesn't matter. You can even turn out the lights completely so your room is illuminated only by the TV, adding extra moodiness to that dance showdown.

An entertainment system

The Xbox 360 was born as a gaming system, and had music, movies and television thrust upon it in later life. The same cannot be said of Xbox One. Mindful of the huge percentage of people who currently use their Xbox 360s to watch video of varying types, Microsoft has built Xbox One to be both a gaming platform and a set-top box.

Besides the general consolidating benefit of watching TV on your gaming console, Xbox One

“The Xbox One's miniscule noise level is startling”

offers several tangible reasons to use it as a television hub. One is the console's ability to track and remember your viewing habits. Recently viewed shows will be automatically “pinned” to the home screen, alongside any pins (i.e., hotlinks) you've made for your favourite programs, and the console will recommend other programming based on what you've watched. Meanwhile, a Trending page will show you what both your friends and the Live community at large are watching (or, in the case of multiplayer games, playing).

The ability to “snap” a second, picture-in-picture window onto your TV window also makes the experience much more interactive than it'd normally be. Want to watch *Dr. Who* while talking to your friend? Just Skype him or her and keep the conversation going on the side of the screen while the TV show plays in the main portion. Or say you want some info on an old *Supernatural* episode mentioned in the one you're watching now. No problem: just bring up an Internet Explorer window on the side of the screen and visit a fansite while the show continues playing on the main screen. And the option to control your Xbox One TV viewing using a SmartGlass device (see Your Phone's A Friend, p88) only broadens your options – apps will have the ability to display on a separate device rather than

have to be docked on the side of your screen. It's still unclear how much of this will be available in the UK at launch, but given Microsoft's partnership with Sky and the arrival of things like BBC iPlayer and 4oD, we suspect we won't be left out.

Microsoft isn't limiting itself to simply refunnelling existing TV content, however. In one of the more stunning announcements in 21 May's Xbox One unveiling, the publisher revealed that it's collaborating with director Steven Spielberg to create a show of its own, available only on the new console: a *Halo* TV series. Microsoft couldn't have picked a better property for this bold foray into custom programming: *Halo*'s an incredibly successful first-party franchise with consistently good transmedia offerings, and the popular web series *Forward Unto Dawn* has paved the way for a full-fledged TV show.

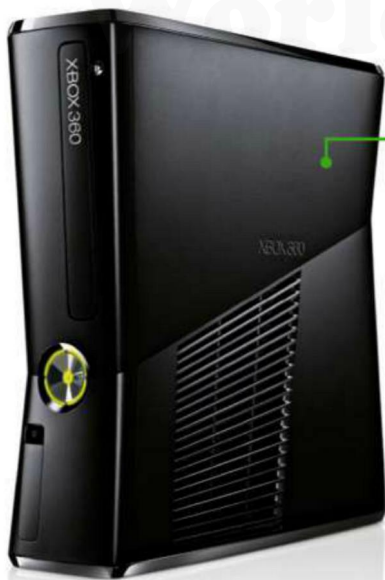
TV and movies seem like such a big part of the Xbox One experience that we've almost forgotten to mention two more cool features. The first is Game DVR, which gives you the ability to record

“The controller's triggers now have individual rumble motors”

UNDER CONTROL

We're pleased to report the main design has hardly changed at all. “We tried all sorts of things,” says hardware director Anil Gupta, “but they just felt like gimmicks. Any speaker was never as good as your main audio, screens meant you kept looking up and down... we decided we just wanted to make a really awesome controller.” Accordingly, the design has been tweaked slightly and there's a new, proper, clicky D-Pad. It also uses the new, super-fast wireless connection – so old controllers won't work.





LIVE LONG AND PROSPER THERE'S STILL MORE TO COME FROM XBOX 360

An unexpected bonus of the Xbox One reveal: Microsoft has no plans to give up on the Xbox 360. "This is not a moving from one to another," says Xbox chief of staff Aaron Greenberg. "We're going to support both platforms." Vice president Yusuf Medhi admits that the company "couldn't wait" to drop the original Xbox due to its manufacturing costs, but it plans on supporting Xbox 360 and its online services for "years" in the future, with new games and apps promised. In fact, Microsoft expects lifetime sales to notch up another 25 million units, many of them in new territories where the console hasn't previously been available, which would take it over the 100 million total sales mark.

PULL THE TRIGGER

Triggers now have individual rumble motors. A racing game gives you a proper trembling throttle when you boot the accelerator, a helicopter's rotors beat through the triggers as you move up and down, and, er, a human heartbeat can pulse from one side to another. It's subtle - you won't be getting any circulation issues using it - but it's really effective, a bit like rumble was all those years ago. Start and Select buttons have been replaced by View and Menu: view is for things like maps and leaderboards, Menu is for more conventional in-game, er, menus.



MICROSOFT STUDIOS' PHIL SPENCER TALKS EXCLUSIVES

You're working on 12 exclusives, eight of which are new. Do those include core games, not just fitness stuff?

Definitely, new core IPs at launch is important. The core gamer is critical to our success. They're foundational, when you think about how we build out our platform, and frankly the early adopter of a lot of the technology that we put in place are those core gamers and we learn from them.

Will that include smaller games as well as blockbusters?

You will see us reaching down, if you want to use that term, a little further with new IP to smaller developers. We have been active on the development side. We probably haven't done the same job shining a flashlight on it that Sony has over the last few months, and kudos to them, but when you think about our investments - both in studios that we've acquired, like Twisted Pixel and PressPlay, and doing original work with partners in our digital ecosystem - we don't call it "indie", but our investment rivals anybody's. You'll also see us investing in existing games, bringing them to our platform. Fostering different development models, different price points, different sizes of games, is something that's core not only in the future but right now.

Will there be games being ported from Windows or Windows Phone to Xbox?

It won't be the same game on every screen. *Skulls of the Shogun* happens to be because it's kind of an easier point-and-click game, but there will be experiences that are significantly different from the experience on the smaller screen, yet they're all connected in to the same ecosystem on the back end. You're progressing and playing in one world.

Will Indie Games be coming back?

A curated ecosystem is important to us, so saying that any form of content can show up on the Xbox, I don't know we're comfortable with that. We have a family box... and we'll want to keep some control over the appropriateness of the content. But making sure that all creators can put content on the box is important to us, and it's not going to be locked that if you're not building a *Halo* game you can't get on Xbox One.

Does an online connection mean you're killing off used games?

We're going to support used games. We're not going into a lot of details on it right now, not because we're trying to hide it but we're working with partners on how the details should play out. It's not a part of the ecosystem that we want to lose - either for the retailers or for the consumers or for us as a platform holder.

“New Achievements can be added to a game *after* release”

gameplay videos of your favourite games, edit them and share the clips with friends. (Microsoft hasn't yet announced what service it'll use to share these videos, or whether they'll be 1080p.) The other feature is one most Xbox fans have long looked forward to: the console's built-in Blu-ray drive, which will obviously be beneficial both for buying TV/movie on-disc and for allowing greater storage for games.

Always ready

In today's need-it-now culture, we hate waiting for anything, including our Xbox 360 taking time to start up, log on to Live, and switch between games and other apps. Well, prepare yourself for a much faster experience with the new Xbox, which is, as Microsoft dubs it, “always ready”.

In the most basic sense, it means you'll never have to sit waiting while it starts (it'll awaken instantly, like your phone or tablet, and immediately resume whatever game or app you were previously playing), or downloads and installs an update. In fact, you'll never even see a dialogue box that said update is happening. Instead, updates will occur seamlessly in the background while you're playing games, watching TV or movies and so on.

The applications are bigger than that, though. Thanks to the Xbox One's greatly improved

processing power, games and apps can run in the background while you're doing something else, meaning you can instantly switch between playing a game of *Call of Duty: Ghosts*, watching the latest episode of your favourite TV show, and surfing the web on your console (assuming you want to do each full-screen), at about the same speed with which you'd switch channels on a TV.

There's no wait for the Dashboard anymore, either. All you have to do is tap the Guide button and it'll just launch you directly into the interface, where you can sort out your business, then snap straight back to your game. Bye bye, screen-pauses and waiting; hello, instant gratification.

The new Xbox Live

That ability for Xbox One processes to run in the background will also be a boon for gamers joining multiplayer matches over Xbox Live, we're told. No more having everyone in your party wait in a lobby while other players fill out the empty slots in your game. With Xbox One's always-ready ability comes a new feature called Party Scout.

This means one person in your party can be configuring a multiplayer game (or joining one that's already set up) while the other party members are, say, watching TV. The new Party App – which can sit docked to the side of the screen, run invisibly in the background, or run on a SmartGlass device – will ping them with updates as the match is created, and a new feature of Live means games can also now display a countdown

timer showing how long you've got until the match starts. Not that it takes much prep; thanks to the instant switching you can hop straight from whatever you're doing to the game loading-bar.

The same tech means you can view what parties of other friends are doing from the new app, and if you want to join in, it'll show how long it'll take them to finish their current activity. Another boost for socialites – the old 100-Friend limit is finally gone, with the limit now at 1,000.

In more good news for competitive types, when you move from Xbox 360 to Xbox One, your Gamer tag and Gamerscore will come along with you. Better yet, Achievements will gain a new feature on the new console: games will offer more Gamerscore and developers will now be able to add new Achievements to a game *after* its release – perhaps using information about how people are playing their game to help them decide what form these extra awards will take.

“We're seeing people get all 1,000 Gamerscore in the first two weeks, and then still be playing that game two months later,” says program manager Chad Gibson. “We want developers to offer Achievements and interesting things to do long after a game ships. You could be playing a game for a year and get a couple thousand Gamerscore because the developer is adding new Achievements every week or every month.”

Microsoft's still confirming the details on this,

ONE VISION

This is the standard camera similar to the existing Kinect, although this is, naturally, high-definition. It's probably the most rudimentary tech in the device, though. The really clever stuff is actually hidden in the middle of the sensor, behind the plastic panel. Here's where you'll find the three photon emitters and the Time of Flight sensor, which gives the new Kinect the ability to accurately map the room even in pitch darkness.

VOICE RECOGNITION

This holds three non-symmetrically-arranged microphones, which are craftily laid out so as to cross-reference incoming sounds and pinpoint them in the room. This means Kinect can identify who in a group is talking – and lock in on them, tuning out and background noise so they can be clearly heard. It can also, via the camera, detect who's been passed the controller, so couch-sharing games get a whole lot easier.



“Kinect 2.0 has a wider field of view, so you can use it in smaller rooms”



but it's mindful of players' Achievement obsessions; there will still be hard limits on the Achievement points that can be provided in the game or be added afterwards. "Developers won't be adding 10,000 Gamerscore a day," assures Gibson. "The cap is, developers have Gamerscore they can spend every month. We don't want to overwhelm gamers."

The other new addition is "challenges", which are time-bound tasks that don't award Gamerscore, but game-specific things like in-game items or currency. They'll be displayed on the console front end, so you can easily see what challenges have been added and if any of your friends have been working towards them.

Even more fascinating, though, is what we're hearing about Reputation on the new console. "We have some really interesting tools coming up for enforcement," grins Xbox Live's Mike Lavin.

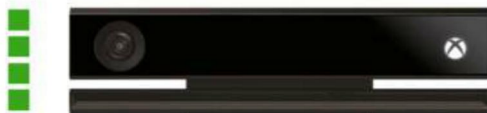
Though the feature's new form is still in flux, Microsoft is planning to make this designation front-and-centre on your Gamertag – as significant as Gamerscore – as a way to help deter some of the bad behaviour (excessive swearing, nasty comments) certain Xbox Live gamers are known for.

While final implementation isn't sorted yet – it might be numbers, stars or badges – Xbox Live will only match you with people with similar Reputation (or if you're in a party, people with the same Reputation as the lowest-ranked member).

"Updates will happen invisibly, and you'll never see a progress bar"

BEADY EYE

There was some initial uncertainty about this, but Kinect does need to be present and connected at all times. Microsoft is mindful that you might not want the camera watching you, though. "You can have it in private mode," assures head of incubation Jeff Henshaw. "And we'll make it really obvious when you're in that mode and when you're not. We're super respectful of that concern, it's a legitimate concern... but there's gonna be so much that Kinect lights up in brilliant ways, you're not always going to want to have it set to private."



DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT
BOYD
MULTERER
CRUNCHES THE NUMBERS



This runs one operating system for games, and one for everything else. Why set it up like that?

In Xbox 360 when you load a game, it reboots into the game, which takes over the entire machine. When you play a different game, the box reboots into the new game. Xbox One's shared memory is a place where we can run code that's alive the entire time the box is on. Games come and go, but now I can have apps – maybe written by a game developer, maybe written by us, it could be written by third parties – that are running the entire time and watching what's happening on the box. We can run Kinect services without using up the game's space, we can have developers running things for a long time. Then the other side, the game-exclusive side, gets the majority of the resources. That is for games and it is built just like a traditional console.

How does using the cloud change the development environment?

In the past, we shipped a box, it was the fixed set of resources that never changed. Now, there's a fixed set of resources in the living room – but there's a *growing* set of resources one hop away from your living room. So the overall experience of this thing will change and get better with time.

What if you've got a terrible internet connection? Would certain bits of the game stop working?

I think of game components as latency-tolerant and latency-intolerant component. An intolerant one would be "I pulled the trigger so I need to see a muzzle flash on screen." That had better show up right away or the gamer is going to notice. However, deciding to crack some thunder in the background is completely insensitive, you don't care what the latency is. The pieces are that those that are most intolerant of network conditions. Like weather systems, or AI – AIs typically don't run every frame, they run every so many frames, because they are latency intolerant. Move that off the box, get it in the cloud, then you have more space on the box to do things like muzzle flashes that are latency sensitive. It frees up more space for graphics and things that need to run locally.



The prospect of heading into an online game secure in the knowledge that the idiots have been filtered out is a highly appealing one, and it also presents the delightful possibility that the service's worst griefers would be forced to only play against each other. If you persistently attract complaints for poor behaviour, you'll find yourself only in games of similarly-ranked players, and only able to talk to other people who have also been reported for bad language. There's the fascinating possibility of a dark, hidden Xbox Live developing, in which only the trolls will go.

Of course, some of this functionality does raise a question that popped up frequently in pre-reveal coverage of the Xbox One: does the device require an active, always-on internet connection? The answer is "not quite". While you will need to be online order to get console and game updates, to use Skype, to get updated Achievement lists and such, you'll be able to watch TV, play single-player games, and use the Blu-ray player if you're offline.

"The Xbox One can track and remember your viewing habits"

There are a couple of caveats, though. One is that developers *will* have the freedom to create games that require an active online connection if they so choose (and indeed they already have; step forward Bungie and *Destiny*). The other, related caveat is that for a game to be able to tap into Microsoft's bank of cloud servers, your console will need to be online. This extra cloud-computing power will allow developers to offload some of a game's functionality, the way *Forza Motorsport 5*'s advanced Drivatar A.I. is cloud-powered whereas the game's graphics and audio are contained locally on the game disc (see our *Forza 5* preview, over the page). Tapping into cloud servers also enables game worlds to be persistent (so the things you do in a game will stay that way), and these servers let you sync up with the real world so you can, say, have the latest real-life stats fed into your sports games. Though game developers aren't mandated to use this cloud power in their games, some of them will certainly be tempted to do so.

So, bottom line: while you won't *need* to be always-online with the Xbox One, the system's

designed to treat offline as an occasional exception rather than the norm. When asked if the console was still a good choice for people in rural areas who don't have access to broadband at all, Microsoft Studios head Phil Spencer acknowledged to us, "If you don't have broadband, and/or you don't have [online] connectivity in your house, this is not the console for you." Following the backlash that followed this news at the announcement, that might change – it wouldn't be hard to turn down online requirements so that a console would require only occasional online appearances – but for now Microsoft remains mum.

As we've hopefully expressed, this is a radical device. Rather than simply repeating the model of previous consoles – a dumb box under the TV, as dead as a DVD player – Microsoft has bet on the

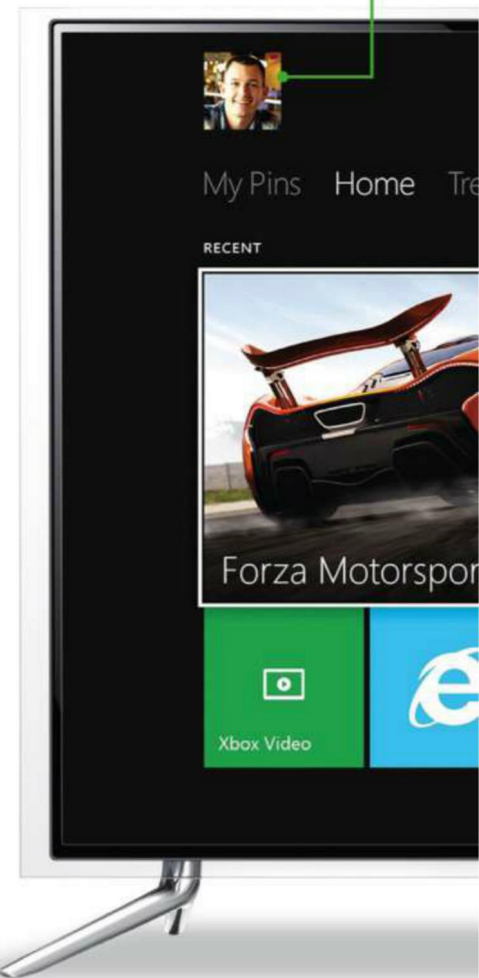
growth of the internet, the ever-growing number of devices and services that we use every day, and the potential of Kinect that the previous hardware could never quite deliver.

At this stage, we've seen a lot of what it can do to TV and only a glimpse of what it can do for games. By the time you read this, that should have changed. Microsoft is keenly aware that nobody ever bought a games console for its TV playback, and the promised, massive, first-party line-up will show what it's truly capable of.

Questions still swirl around how it'll handle offline play, but the online vision is intoxicating. The concept of limitless processing power, near-permanent connection to your friends, an input device that can identify your face and monitor your heartbeat opens up experiences way, way beyond what we're used to having on Xbox 360. Sure, you'll still be able to play *Call of Duty* – but imagine a horror game that tracks your heartbeat, or a *Metal Gear* game that interrogates you by name, or a game world that changes based on your team's multiplayer prowess. No longer tied to discs or individual consoles, the future of Xbox gaming is uncertain – and extremely exciting. Look forward to more details this week on oxm.co.uk, and in future issues.

EVERYTHING'S GOLDEN

Also good for Gold: if one account on a console is Gold, then every account on that console can use Gold benefits. This replaces the previous Xbox Live Family bundle; now you just have one account and everybody reaps the benefits. You can also sign in to your account on any other console and they can reap the benefits of Gold while you're signed in – including access to all your games and entertainment, stored in the cloud.



ANY AVATARS?

We haven't seen any Avatars yet; Microsoft hasn't yet decided if they'll come over along with your Gamerscore. XBLA games are undecided too – at the moment they don't work because Xbox One is so different to Xbox 360; Microsoft is "exploring" the situation but didn't have anything to announce as we went to press.

YOUR PHONE'S A FRIEND MOBILES, TABLETS AND XBOX ONE



It got off to a humble start last autumn, but SmartGlass – the app that turns your tablet or smartphone into a second screen that interacts with your Xbox 360 – has grown steadily: a wider variety of games and apps support it now, and Microsoft has had

"more than 10 million downloads across 2,000 device types," although that number is inflated by the huge array of different Android phones. Clearly, enough people are interested that the publisher wants to support and evolve the tech, but what are its

plans? The more short-term, pre-launch goal seems to be better integrating TV screen and portable screen as seen in apps like *Forza Horizon's* GPS. For Xbox One, the plans are more ambitious. Microsoft views it as a tether that keeps you intimately connected with what's

happening on your Xbox, even when you're not in front of it. In your living room, SmartGlass apps will let you control basic functions (power, volume, Blu-ray player), search and browse TV programming, and offer contextual help for the system, games, and apps – all with the

same kind of speed the new Xbox itself offers. When you're on the go, SmartGlass will let you search and line up content for when you get back to your Xbox One, easily view Achievements and challenges (including, it looks like, the footage you've captured using



“There’s a fascinating possibility of a dark, hidden Xbox Live developing to which only the trolls will go”

THE BIG QUESTIONS ANSWERED

Is Xbox Live Silver still an option?

Yup. It’s just called Xbox Live, and it gives you access to (as far as we can tell) the same basic functionality.

Is Gold still going to be paid-for?

Yes, but the price won’t change and any existing subscription will roll over. You can use your account on both Xbox 360 and Xbox One.

Can we use the TV features in the UK?

Microsoft is “committed to bringing live TV through various solutions to all the markets where the new Xbox will be available,” but has no details.

How long can the console go without going online?

This hasn’t been decided yet. European studio boss Phil Harrison suggested you’d have to go online once every 24 hours, but this isn’t final.

Is cloud computing going to take me over my bandwidth cap?

Apparently not. Games will be clever about what they send to the cloud, and the normal run of things shouldn’t rack up much more bandwidth than Xbox Live does today.

Ah, but is it going to fall over when everybody’s online?

Microsoft has thought of this. Developers can set up cloud services so that they’re throttled during peak time (say, early evenings) and scale up when it’s quieter.

Does the new Xbox Live mean that old Gamertags will be reintroduced?

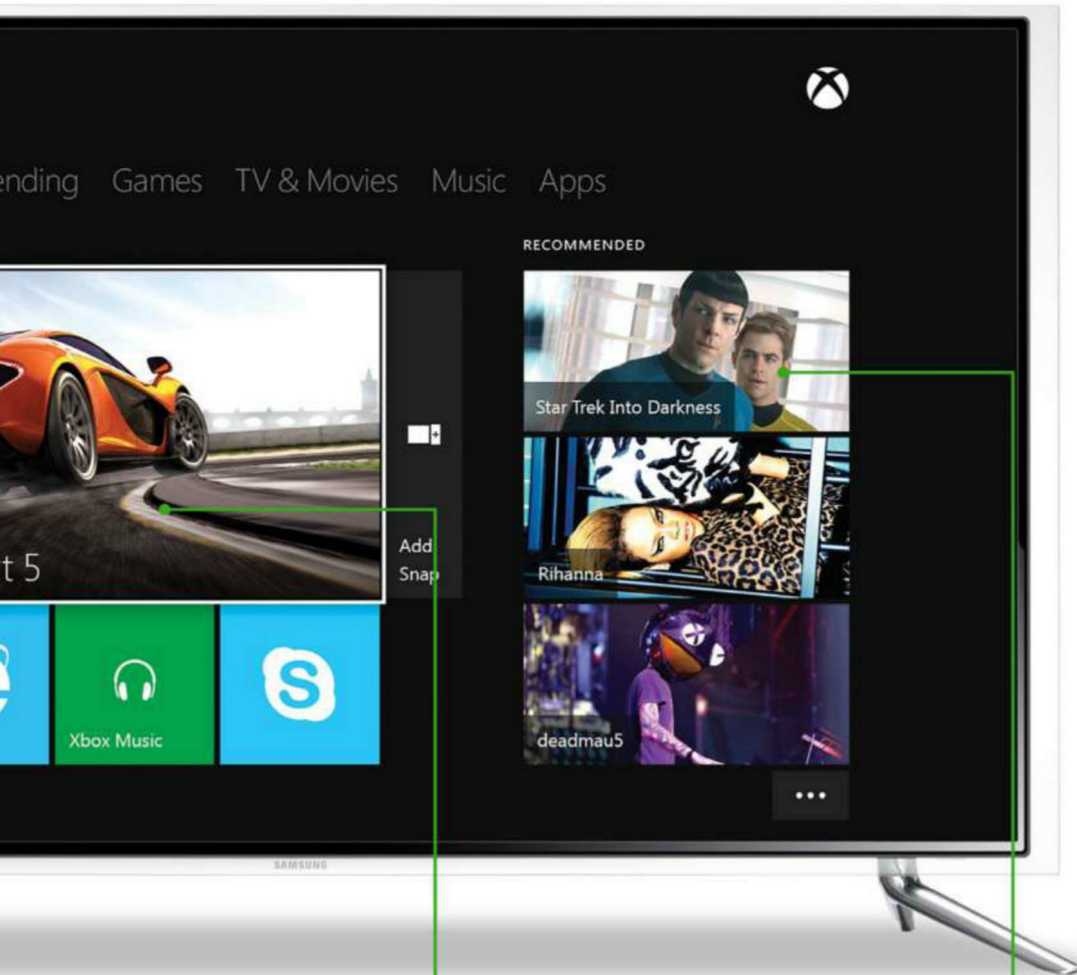
Microsoft “has nothing to announce at this time”.

What games are coming out for it?

12 exclusives in the first year. Ten multiplatform third-party games have been confirmed (more on them over the page) and there’ll be more at E3.

When is it coming out, and how much will it cost?

That wasn’t confirmed as we went to press – but it might have been revealed at E3. Check oxm.co.uk for the latest.



WHAT'S MINE'S MY OWN

Because Xbox Live now keeps track of all the games you own, you can treat big games like XBLA titles today – and access them from *any* Xbox One. Simply sign in as yourself and you can access any of your games (downloading them if they aren’t present) and they’ll be available on that console as long as you stay signed in.

REBORN FREE

Sony has won many people over to its PlayStation Plus service by giving free games to users, which remain playable for as long as the subscription lasts – now Microsoft is going to follow suit. Xbox Live’s Mike Lavin couldn’t confirm details, but in the future you can expect Gold membership to offer free games, movies and access to services.

the GameDVR feature) connect with people on your Friends List, and purchase downloadable content for your games. Most intriguing is the team’s desire to enable entertainment experiences designed specifically for SmartGlass users – and that’d allow up to 16

people with SmartGlass devices to hook up for local multiplayer. What form would they take? MS gave the example of a card game where each player’s face-down cards were visible on their individual tablet or smartphone – but that seemed like a basic starting point.

“While you won’t *need* to be online at all times, it’s built to be attached to an internet connection”



Pub: Microsoft Studios
Dev: Turn 10
Release: Autumn
Players: TBC

FORZA MOT

Impossible detail. Infinite opponents. Constantly evolving AI. How Microsoft's racing studio harnessed the power of Xbox One



ON THAT BOMBSHELL

"Our work with *Top Gear* has changed, so it's broadened beyond Jeremy," says Greenawalt. Details will appear later this year, but he says it's "totally integrated throughout the game rather than just one button on one place in the game. We'll have some good news about it."



Words: Jon Hicks

FORZA HORIZON 5

The clue's in the codename. Prior to its unveiling at the Xbox Reveal event last month, this was known only as Flagship. It's a name that marks the standard-bearer for all Xbox One's launch titles, the one that shows everything the new platform can do. It sets the standard for everybody else, and – in a first for the franchise – it's got to do so the day Xbox One launches. It is, says Turn 10 studio head Alan Hartman, "the hardest thing we've ever done."

Part of that is, of course, a huge collection of cars recreated in never-before-seen detail. You can't show up at a console launch with anything less than photographic realism, and this delivers – although probably not in the way you're expecting. The world itself is realistically modelled using laser scans accurate to six millimetres of detail. The

score is dynamically generated, and the audio effects are astonishing. But the bit where it really feels like science fiction is the AI. There isn't any.

The drive of your life

Faced with the limitless power of Xbox One's cloud computing, Turn 10 has junked AI entirely and handed things over to a vast, slightly sinister-sounding learning network called Drivatar, which sounds like nothing less than Skynet with a driving licence. It means opponents who aren't pre-programmed, but learn from you and other players. Your Drivatar is a digital version of you, constantly refined from watching every game you play.

"It learns how you attack corners and where you cut. It learns how you use the car's unique traits and technology, how you drive in traffic and where you play dirty," explains Turn 10's Dan Greenawalt.

"More importantly, it starts to generalise your traits to similar cars, similar circumstances and similar corners, so it can recreate your behaviour on tracks and in cars you've never played. As you train your Drivatar on more cars and tracks, its generalisation decreases. But this isn't simply about replicating your lap times; this is about how you are fast and how you react to pressure and opponents." It is, claims Greenawalt, the end of AI as we know it.

"We unfortunately use the word AI in this industry to say 'opponents'. And these will be opponents. But they will not be AI," clarifies Greenawalt. "Drivatar is real, genuine intelligence. It's not scripted, it's learning – it's more like search. It's figuring out 'oh, I saw what you did there, I see what you did there, I'm going to learn something new and I'm going to go do it.'"

AUDIO DIRECTOR NICK WISWELL BENDS YOUR EAR

It seems like Xbox One has given you a lot more toys to play with.

Racing games are very CPU-heavy on audio because cars are complicated things with loads of sounds playing. So music's always been quite simple because we've never had the ability to do lots of intricate car noises and complicated music systems running at the same time, but now with the power of Xbox One, we can start doing far more interesting things with music.

Why ditch the soundtrack?

A licensed soundtrack is a very divisive thing. We pick music that we think is good for racing to. But there's an awful lot of people who would go "well, I don't like that. Why didn't you put my favourite band in?" But nobody ever goes to the cinema and goes "oh, I don't like that score. That score didn't work at all." So what we're doing here is trying to create something that fits the game and can actually be used as a gameplay device. One of the goals we had with the audio system, or the music system, is that even if you actually weren't watching what was happening, you could pretty much tell from the music what was going on at the time.

How do you make cars seem loud without annoying the neighbours?

In the real world, cars have a lot of low end. And you feel that: you get a sense of "boom" as the car goes full throttle because they're so loud. Now, very rarely in your living room are you ever going to hear a car at that volume. So we're going to use the subwoofer to simulate some of that, to really give you that punch as you stomp on the throttle. When sound gets to a certain level your ears start to distort, so we've modelled that to make the car sound big and loud even though you're playing it quieter.



You'll hear almost every part of the drivetrain.

CREATIVE DIRECTOR DAN GREENAWALT ON DESIGNING IMPERFECTION

Drivatar sounds a bit like Skynet. Do you actually keep control of it?

There is no way to answer that question without foreshadowing the fall of humanity. I can confirm *Forza 5* will feature no weapons. On a more factual note, the system has multiple overrides on the server. We can tinker with the system to alter each Drivatar's ability to observe, store or recreate behaviour. For example, as you gain skill as a driver, so does your Drivatar. It does this by forgetting outdated behaviour as you continually refine your skills.

How does the career work?

Every car has its own career, broken into segments that are like leagues - American muscle car, or maybe European hot hatch. We tell you what is so awesome about, say, hot hatches, then you pick one and go through a whole career that was made for it. So if you pick the new Volkswagen Golf R, you get a career that was bespoke designed for that Golf R. And you get to fall in love with that car, understand its nuances and what makes it so unique.

How does experience work now?

Now you're going to win XP and get money for everything you do across the entire game. Whether it's split-screen, single-player or multiplayer, whether it's Rivals mode or asynchronous play, you earn the same amount of money, the same amount of XP, everywhere you go.

Was there a three-line whip to use all the new features?

We're never mandated, and that's the secret. We're the creative organisation. We break off creative teams to start thinking about how to use new hardware. That's really the process.

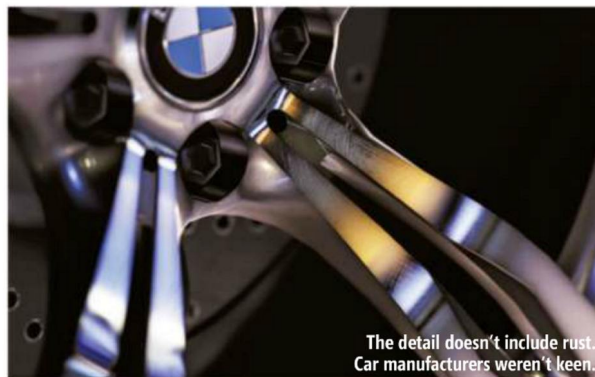


Wheel-to-wheel racing has never been so thrilling.

It's a massive boost in realism, and in more ways than one. "Instead of just being 10 per cent, 20 per cent of Xbox One's capability, we can make AI 600 per cent of its capability," says Greenawalt. "Put it in the cloud and free up that 10 per cent or 20 per cent to make the graphics better - on a box that's already more powerful than we worked on before."

Which is where those new visuals come in, with their remarkable level of fidelity. If it wasn't for the screen tearing on the work-in-progress build, you'd have difficulty distinguishing *Forza's* BMW M5 from reality. The secret, it turns out, is dirt.

"Everybody wants perfection, and we delivered that in *Forza 4* with Autovista," says art team lead Gabriel Garcia. "But perfection is not authentic. So we introduce telltale signs of the manufacturing process." Paint has a barely perceptible orange-peel finish from where the droplets landed. Brake discs display scratches where the pads grip them. Polished surfaces are actually polished, with tiny scratches from buffing. Cars look more realistic than the uncanny valley gloss in previous games.



The detail doesn't include rust. Car manufacturers weren't keen.

"Cars look much more realistic than the uncanny valley gloss we've seen in previous games"

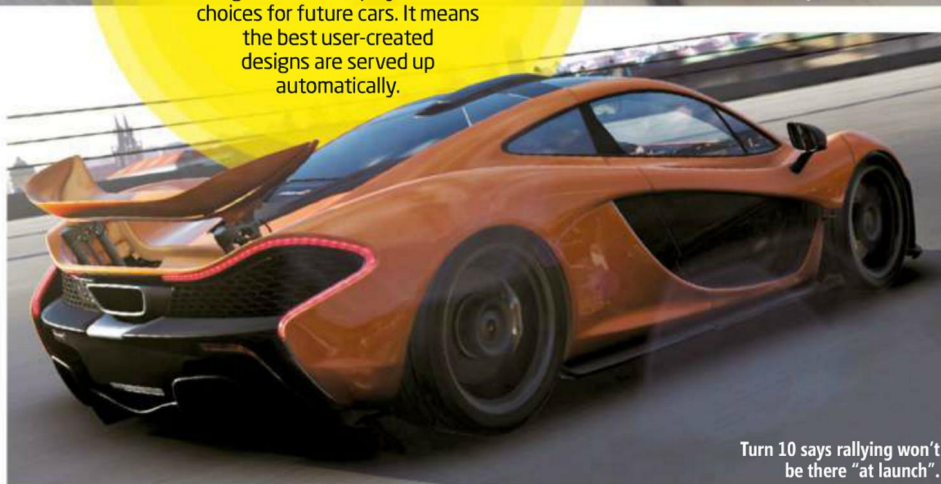


SWEET RIDE

Custom paint jobs have been overhauled. When you get a new car, you're presented with custom liveries; your choices feed back into an Amazon-style recommendation engine, which displays similar choices for future cars. It means the best user-created designs are served up automatically.



It's easy to win when you're the only car on the track.



Turn 10 says rallying won't be there "at launch".

Added to this is the road grime from racing, and the teeniest of details such as bluing on the chrome, all of which contribute to what Greenawalt calls "the story of the car" – the way it reflects your journey. "In *Forza 4* we had about 54–60 materials in a car," says Garcia. "In *Forza 5* we're up to 1,300 unique materials that can be applied to any car. And we haven't hit the limit." Bathed in the fruits of a new lighting system, it's only the swooping camera that gives away the fact it's not a real car.

Dirty driving

The world itself is rendered in the same level of detail. The setting for the opening race, Prague, was chosen to show off Xbox One's graphical chops, and in a first for the series is based on 1:1 laser scanning of the road itself. The resulting wireframe data is accurate to within six millimetres, and paired with high-definition 360-degree video capture of the track – similar to Google Maps' Street View, only far higher resolution – enables Turn 10 to create a course so detailed you can see moss between paving stones, fog coming off the river, or the paint finish on nearby buildings.

This process is a key example of how the studio's achieving such obsessive levels of detail without requiring a blank cheque and infinite staff; capturing such detailed reference material makes it easier to model the track, leaving artists free to focus on, well, artistic detail. Like more dirt. "The idea is that we're in the 23rd hour of the 24-hour Le Mans," says content art director Matt Collins. "Every track really feels like it's really been raced on; it's telling a story as you go round it. If you've seen the end of those races, there's rubber, there's marbles, it just feels like it's been through a war."

It also has to feel like a race that people are attending and caring about. Still more of Xbox One's graphical horsepower is thrown at creating denser crowds, and still more at a remarkable new audio system that makes it sound like a real crowd, thanks to physics-powered sound mixing that juggles thousands of sounds and music samples simultaneously. The detail lavished on the audio rivals that of the visuals, and – possibly because it's more unexpected – to arguably superior effect. Every significant part of every vehicle has been

"The audio team have mixed tyre screeches with human screams"

recorded and mapped against a dizzying range of variables – everything from RPM to distance from you to proximity to the wall – and for every car on the track, rather than just yours as before.

Hollywood calling

Then there's the soundtrack. Or rather, there isn't. Where previous games used up all the hardware for car sounds and had to use licensed tracks for music, *Forza 5* has a dynamically generated score. Orchestral strings, pounding drums and choral chants have been separately recorded and are mixed together on the fly. It sounds more like *Halo* than a racing game, and it builds from the serenity of inspecting your garage to the pending drama of the imminent battle, then – following the purposefully tense quiet of the 3, 2, 1 build-up – to a stirring cinematic score.



Interiors are also created to obsessive levels of detail.

"We're inspired by the Hollywood car chase," says audio director Nick Wiswell. "And we can control elements of the mix based on what's happening in the race. If you're towards the back, we can dim it out; if you're towards the front, we can push it up. We even have an element where, as you hunt down the guy in front, you have a tension layer we can bring in and build. And it releases and starts again as you get to the next guy."

Better yet, the audio team have borrowed from Hollywood to crank up the emotional impact. Tyre screeches have been mixed with human screams; a throaty supercar throttle has been infused with a lion's roar. The result tingles the nervous system in the way a simple engine note never could, and in-game it delivers a knockout blow.

As three cars thunder wheel-to-wheel under an arch and into a square, an awesome combination of duelling engine notes bounces off surrounding buildings, the roar of the crowd and the thumping rotors of a camera helicopter. It's here, with the city stretching off into the seemingly limitless draw distance and the sunlight glaring off the windows, that it feels like the next generation is here.

Even now, before we get behind the wheel, it's clear Xbox One is powering a game that's several orders of magnitude more ambitious than any other racing game. It will, quite literally, put you closer to the vehicles and the track than any other game, too. The only thing missing is smell. So far.

Pub: Activision
Dev: Infinity Ward
Release: November
Players: TBC

CALL OF DUTY: GHOSTS

The world's biggest - and loudest - series takes a bow (wow) on Xbox One

After the lavish excess of the *Modern Warfare* trilogy, *Call of Duty's* next-gen debut grounds itself with a darker, more personal tale. *Ghosts* follows a ragtag group of soldiers - the remnants of various Special Ops forces - as they attempt to survive the fallout of a mass event that leaves America in disarray.

While we're sure the soldiers will be as memorable as Soap MacTavish and What's-His-Face from *Black Ops*, it's the *Ghosts'* seventh member - a German Shepherd - who has us drooling. That's right - for the first time you have a canine companion, who can scale areas lumbering humans can't reach, sniff out explosives and (we're guessing) bite idiot enemy soldiers on the bum.

How exactly this will work in-game has yet to be revealed, but executive producer Mark Rubin chatted to us at length about how soldiers direct their woofy co-workers around the field by 'steering' them with electrical pulses, so we'd bet our last Bonio on that featuring. An even safer bet is that the dog will cark it at some point, so we hope the Xbox One is capable of dispensing hankies.

It's all in the details

Talking of next generation, *Ghosts* hopes to set the technical benchmark on launch day in the same way *CoD2* did on Xbox 360. With high-fidelity visuals far beyond the capabilities of current-gen consoles, it's well on its way to repeating the trick. *Ghosts* owes its handsome looks to a process called 'Sub D'. This sees the

game engine exponentially increase the texture count as and when needed, allowing for staggering detail. Guns are accurately modelled down to the texture of the grips. Soldiers' hands boast fine hair, skin blemishes and dirt under their fingernails. You can even see the tattoo inside your doggy pal's ears.

An early jungle level looks and feels so humid you could use your TV as a fireplace: steam rises from the floor, insects and leaves flutter around your head, and the sun peeks through the fronds with such intensity that if you turn away to stare at a rock edge, it takes your soldier's irises a few seconds to adapt.

Aside from visual flourishes, however, this is classic *Call of Duty*. And why not? You wouldn't want to teach an old dog new tricks - not when its current trick is Best of Show.

QUAKE ON ME

Infinity Ward is shaking up multiplayer in the most literal way possible. Certain maps play host to cataclysmic events such as earthquakes and tornados - forcing players to scramble to safety. Other environmental hazards - such as tumbling logs - can be triggered by players deliberately.

XBOX ONE



Even the fish have AI. Xbox One can do it all.



The final game will have astounding levels of detail.



Someone needs to practise parallel parking.



SLIDE REMARKS

There are a few alterations to player locomotion to quicken the flow of play. The biggest change is that you now hurdle over small walls, rather than enduring that sad little jumping animation. Elsewhere, you can lean into blind corners and - this is the coolest bit - slide out of the line of fire if you're in a pickle.

Pub: Ubisoft
Dev: Ubisoft Montreal
Release: 22 Nov
Players: TBC

WATCH

Is Watch Dogs a real GTA beater, or will its obvious inspirations hold it back?

XBOX ONE



MEDIA FRENZY

The Criminal Activity gauge affects how the city responds to you. Keep annoying the police or stomp lowlives in full view of others, and the media will pay you more attention. There are severe consequences - at one point, a shop owner pulls a gun on Aiden after seeing him on the news.

DOGS

Aiden Pearce might be a vengeful, sociopathic vigilante with zero regard for the notion of personal privacy, on a quest to transform Chicago's digital infrastructure into one colossal, remotely operated death-trap, but never let it be said that he doesn't know how to have fun. For starters, he's a gamer. Well, of a sort. Aiden's too busy siphoning off SMS conversations and rearranging faces with his posh telescopic nightstick to spend time in front of an Xbox, next gen or otherwise, but there is time in his schedule for the odd round of NVSN, an achingly flashy Alternate Reality experience that can be downloaded from an in-game App Store.

Having hounded a speeding perp into a timely set of motorised bollards, our demo handler takes a moment to try the app out. Suddenly, the streets of downtown Chicago are filled with drifting neon demons, latching onto and sucking energy from pedestrians in a satirical poke at the brain-draining addictiveness of social media in general. Aiden draws a *Tron*-style laser pistol and gets busy score-attacking, swiping a more powerful shotgun-type weapon from the pavement as he goes. Phones aren't just for gaming, of course - you can also identify and download music that's playing in the world using the SongSneak app, send messages to other players by way of TalkFeed, browse trivia on locations care of Hot Spots, access a hacker

survival guide, Dedsec, and tap into currently unrevealed multiplayer functions. The only thing you can't do, from what we've seen so far, is make actual phone calls. Suffice to say, *Grand Theft Auto IV*'s cellphone functionality has some catching up to do.

Smarterphone gaming

Aiden's brief spell of law-abiding behaviour is a chance to appreciate just how nuanced Ubisoft's vision of Chicago can be, providing you let things lie. A passing commuter hesitates, then sneezes uproariously. A woman shakes the rain off her umbrella delicately before stepping into a taxi cab. A drunk lurches into and out of the road, holding his diaphragm. Locals loiter, converse, drift from group to group. Aiden's sinister dispassion and the VR-style hacker's HUD conspire to place all these human touches at a clinical remove, but the simulation is so rich that it's impossible to let go entirely. And a good thing too - Ubisoft Montreal's prior efforts felt a shade sterile thanks to the Animus's interventions, despite their depth of period reference. As creative director Jonathan Morin observes, "there's no point to a game like *Watch Dogs* unless you feel those little details."

There's also no point to a game like *Watch Dogs* if you're not free to utterly scupper the world's natural flow at any given moment and, thankfully, Aiden has a sizeable arsenal of disruptive tools to draw upon, most closeted within the wireless functions of his phone. It is, admittedly, a little disappointing to discover that many of these tricks are variants on established ideas with a new supporting fiction. To cut a long story short, *Watch Dogs* is an *Assassin's Creed*-style blend of parkour and social stealth that takes place in a *GTA*-style world - not quite the next-gen revolution Ubisoft tantalised us with at E3 2012. Still, "*GTA* meets *Assassin's Creed*" is hardly a toxic combination, and it's a combination *Watch Dogs* executes with considerable flair - as lead gameplay programmer Eric Baillargeon assures us: "it's the mixture of all these systems that makes the game so refreshing and so new." And then there's the mostly unrevealed online, which allows players to "invade" each other's sessions much as they do Chicago's connected devices. "If you're playing *Watch Dogs* and you think you're alone," Morin cautions, "think again." More on that front in the near future, hopefully.

"Aiden has a sizeable arsenal of disruptive tools to draw upon"

CREATIVE DIRECTOR JONATHAN MORIN TALKS CYBER-TERRORISM



Were there any prototype digital technologies you couldn't reference in *Watch Dogs*? Google Glass, for instance?

No, not really, because the intention of *Watch Dogs* was to make it as real as possible. And 'real' means something that's already very integrated with society. Google Glass is cool, but Google Glass is not implemented in society yet.

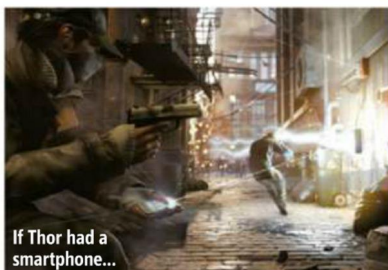
We're really happy when people talk about *Watch Dogs* and say very different things depending on who they are. Like, "oh, it's a cyberpunk extravaganza," and then another guy would say "it's one of those really relevant, contemporary games." And I heard "neo-futuristic stylings" mentioned as well. All of those are fine by me. It's reality in an alternative Chicago - we really want to focus on the impact of technology on today's people.

This is a celebration of connectivity, but also a critique of it. Do you worry that you risk contradicting yourself?

It's up to the player to use it, and see what repercussions it will cause, and see how he feels about it. Celebrating technology is certainly a part, but it's more about getting people to reflect on the subject. I have no doubt that human beings will use this technology for good, that there will not be a dystopian world, but you have to keep making people think. *Watch Dogs* will hopefully persuade people to start digging, realising that, you know, on the one hand social media is a positive invention, but on the other there are social media addicts who are addicted to the opinions of other people, which could be a pretty bad thing. But that's not because technology's bad, it's because the person is flawed.

How will the Xbox 360 version differ from the Xbox One version?

The soul of the game will be the same. *Watch Dogs* hasn't been built for the technology, it's been built to be an exciting experience. And since we've been at it for four years, our programmers and everybody knew that we'd want to release it on current gen too, so when we announced it there was a plan for all platforms.



If Thor had a smartphone...



HOT SPOT

You can enter many buildings - if not physically, then with a wifi hotspot. Before hacking the emitter, you must hack a source box at ground level. The wifi access then lets you access devices within the building. In the demo, Aiden listens to a tenant's romantic liaison with a dressmaker's dummy. What happens in Chicago...



SHARED EXPERIENCES

The mostly unrevealed multiplayer has a traditional side (e.g. competitive racing), but even familiar elements have been "Watch Dog-ified". The real game-changer could be invading another player's Chicago, possibly in the guise of an NPC, and tracking that player through the city by way of its surveillance systems. Morin won't discuss the specifics - half the fun is in uncovering what the online features actually do, anyway.



No idea who this is, but she's important.



Car handling looks weighty but easy to master.



Stalled trains make good cover from snipers.

XBOX ONE



Should have gone to Specsavers, we reckon.

"Snipe car tyres while hurtling around aboard a stolen bike"

Like the Rome of *Assassin's Creed: Brotherhood*, the world of *Watch Dogs* is at once faithful to the subject matter and a calculating departure from it. There are dazzling replicas of famous landmarks, such as the Willis Tower, along with more mundane minutiae such as water silos and early 20th century iron monorail bridges. As Morin explains, the developer's preoccupation with the consequences of ubiquitous connectivity for personal privacy is grounded in the fact that Chicago is the most surveilled city in North America. But this is a game, not a model town, and you'll appreciate that the second you run into one of the CTOS bases (that's "Central Operating System"). These heavily guarded installations fulfil a similar function to *Far Cry 3*'s pirate outposts, blanketing the radar in obstinate grey mist until conquered, which unlocks secondary missions and hacking opportunities in the local area. How you go about said conquering is, of course, open to some variation and initiative on your part.

Assuming you decide that discretion isn't the better part of valour, firefights in *Watch Dogs*

show the unmistakable influence of *Splinter Cell* and *Ghost Recon*. Aiden can lock to, move around and leap over cover, and the AI is pleasantly susceptible to flanking (a VR silhouetting feature lets you pin down foes when they're out of direct view). Expect "all the guns you're used to in games", including SMGs, LMGs, sniper rifles, assault rifles and shotguns. A safer strategy that's truer to the game's spirit would be to scout the base out, hacking CCTV's while lurking in the shadow of a parked van, then hacking other devices (such as gate locks and deployable bullet shields) through those cameras. Who knows, perhaps you can reach and corrupt the central server without firing a shot, or troubling a soul.

Aiden's equipped with a slo-mo "Focus" move, letting him snipe car tyres and trip the city's mechanisms while hurtling around aboard a stolen bike. He's also sturdy enough to walk off bullet wounds, after the example of Marcus Fenix, which somewhat cuts against Ubisoft's account of an "ordinary hero", reliant on cunning rather than paranormal brawn. Still, bending the universe's

rules now and again to make players feel powerful is probably preferable to unrelenting death of high-velocity lead poisoning.

The human element

Hacking is also a window into the lives of fellow citizens, and thus a powerful storytelling tool. You'll scrape particles of backstory (some of which trigger missions) from the phones and tablets of hundreds of virtual beings – age, salary, straplines such as "celebrity stalker" or "avid bird enthusiast", and snippets from the subject's medical history. *Watch Dogs*' broader aim is to inspire sympathy for them in spite of their reductive digital labels.

This chimes with what Morin calls "the pleasure of leaving gaps that the player can fill in. That character is a bunch of pixels, but in my head, he's something grand." *Watch Dogs*: a game about the near-future that rediscovers the glories of games past? It's as much about car chases, shooting and social stealth as leveraging the vulnerabilities of a connected city. *Watch Dogs* is, however, a striking take on those ideas and stylishly refined.

PARTING SHOT

Shinji Mikami says this will be his last game as director. He's responsible for some of Capcom's best-loved titles. *Devil May Cry*, *Viewtiful Joe*, *God Hand*, and *Resi 4* are all his, and he created *Vanquish* for Sega. He also worked on *Goof Troop*, which at least proves he's human.

Pub: Bethesda
Dev: Tango Gameworks
Release: 2014
Players: 1

THE EVIL WITHIN

There will be blood. Corridors of blood. And dirty tiles

There's a mixture of the familiar and the new in the half-hour playthrough we're shown of *The Evil Within*. Sent to investigate a disturbance at an asylum, Sebastian Police-Detective and his two colleagues decide the most compellingly creepy thing to do would be split up. Even at this early stage, the camera is making its horrific intentions known, tilting uneasily.

The Evil Within wants to undermine your trust and leave you uncertain. Director Shinji Mikami is also the creator of *Resident Evil*, and the new title feels like a cheeky synonymous play on that name. But this actually feels more like *Silent Hill*: an unreliable world, geometry-headed monsters and a bit where you hide in a locker, peering

through the slats. It feels like a story that hovers in your peripheral vision, politely declining to snap into focus. Important point: this is a good thing. Perhaps a more appropriate (but less chilling) synonym would have been "Mute Hump".

Developer Tango wastes little time in plunging Sebastian into hell-world, and we find ourselves suspended from the ceiling in an upside down sea of bodies. The creatures of this world leak into view. A butcher, who carves up the bodies around us. A seemingly unkillable "chainsaw guy", who mangles our ankle and chases us, limping, down a corridor. "You'll do a lot of running," we're told.

One scene has Sebastian placing mine traps at windows, to thin the ranks of an oncoming horde. Enough enemies get

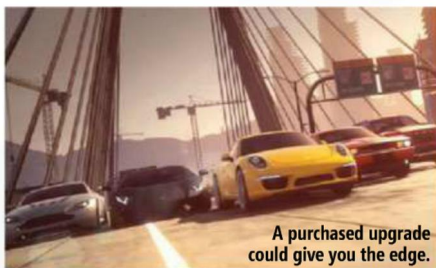
through to give us an idea of how easily he'll be overwhelmed if it ever turns into a melee brawl. And when it comes to the more savage creatures, such as the skittering collection of limbs that hauls itself out of a puddle of blood, it all feels sinkingly hopeless.

The Evil Within expertly blends the classic and the modern. We see the world outside the asylum that looks apocalyptic. We see corridors lengthen, hallucinatory crimson floods that disappear, and environments that suddenly switch around, leaving us in another place altogether. Unburdened by the lore of a long-running series, this is a survival horror game at its most potent stage: when we know nothing of the rules that govern it. It almost seems a shame to learn those rules. But we're itching to get cracking.





Ooh, look at the shiny headlight. It's, er, shiny.



A purchased upgrade could give you the edge.



The Koenigsegg police car is an absolute beast.

NEED FOR SPEED: RIVALS

EA's Ghost spirits NFS onto Xbox One

Pub: EA
Dev: Ghost Games
Release: Autumn
Players: TBC

When Ghost Games executive Marcus Nilsson tells us: "We have literally built a new studio, built a new team, to produce this game," he isn't exaggerating. He himself was plucked from DICE to work at the new studio, tasked with defining *Need For Speed* for a new generation of hardware. And, funnily enough, *Need For Speed* on a new generation sounds a lot like *Hot Pursuit 2*.

The cops and racers of *NFS: Rivals* are battling for supremacy in Redview County: a mixture of *Most Wanted*'s open world and *Hot Pursuit*'s open roads. The Autolog-powered connectivity of Criterion's last two games will be expanded on for *Rivals*, thanks

to EA's AllDrive, another one of those fancily named bits of proprietary tech that nonetheless sounds like a good idea.

"Say you're playing *Rivals*," Nilsson explains. "You boot up, start playing single-player and do your progression as a cop or racer, doing whatever you think is fun in that game: racing, collectibles, whatever. Then I boot up, and because we're friends, I get put into your world."

"It's a big world. I can be doing my single-player progression in that world, doing pursuits or whatever, but during that time I can meet up with you, either by chance or choosing to race together. You could be in a pursuit chasing someone, and I could be in a pursuit chasing other AI racers, and those

two pursuits could merge. So we go from a single-player experience into a multiplayer experience just through player action and seeing what develops in the world."

As more people join your world, the game will continue to adapt, changing the nature of the experience to accommodate more and more players. It seems precisely the kind of connected experience Xbox One is designed to encourage, though EA Ghost hasn't forgotten the basics. Nilsson's team is working closely with Criterion to capture the feel of the studio's games. "I think Criterion is one of the most talented developers of arcade racing games," he enthuses. "I think its focus on the car, the feel of the car – no one does that better."





Quantum Break

Pub Microsoft | Dev Remedy | Release 2014

This fascinating new title from *Alan Wake* creator Remedy incorporates both live-action TV – starring a supernaturally-gifted child – and a more conventional third-person action game. “If you know anything about Remedy, storytelling is in their DNA,” says Microsoft Studios’ Phil Spencer. “They tell stories that are amazing.” So the studio got right on board with Microsoft’s plans for TV, and cooked up something that’s part TV show and part videogame.

“Choices you make in the game can impact the show and the show will change based on choices people make in the game,” reveals Spencer. “The mechanic revolves around time, and people who can stop time – yes, you can make a *Blinx* joke here – and the technical capability of Xbox One really starts to shine.” Namely, instead of having to turn the game off and switch into video playback for a cutscene, the Xbox One is gutsy enough to “let you interact with those set-pieces directly, and play in them.”

The scene in the trailer – in which the child triggers a glitchy memory of a tanker ploughing through a bridge – is an example of this. It looks like a canned, pre-rendered event, but it’s all a living game system. You can actually freeze time at any point during the collision and explore the world, traversing the ruined bridge structure frozen in the act of being ripped apart, with all the AI and interactivity you’d expect from a normal game level. “These huge set-pieces actually turn into, not these passive CG assets, but something that you actually get to play with,” Spencer enthuses.

Still more ambitious is how *Quantum Break* will handle the split between live-action and game. “Our goal isn’t that we’ve fully cut 13, 14 episodes of a television show that runs while we release the game, but that these two paths intertwine where as a gamer I’ll make decisions that will impact how the TV show plays out and vice versa. We want to add interactivity to the video as well, which feeds actually how we progress the game.” It’s an ambitious concept, and born of the interaction between Microsoft’s games team and its new LA entertainment studio. “Over the last ten years we’ve seen how games change when a console is connected to the internet,” says Spencer. “Now, television is going to become more interactive.” Intriguing stuff; there may be more at E3.

“You can freeze cutscenes and play in them”



FANTASY FOOTBALL

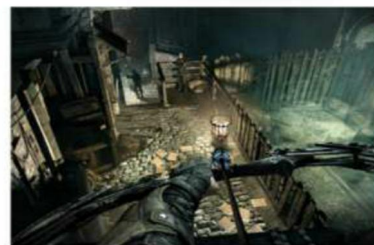
EA claims that the new cloud-based version of Xbox Live will mean that *FIFA 14* benefits from a steady stream of daily updated content. Perhaps some of this content will relate to FIFA Ultimate Team, which will offer unspecified exclusive content on Xbox Live.



FIFA 14

Pub EA | Dev EA Canada | Release 27 Sep

It’s no surprise that Xbox One will enjoy a *FIFA* release this autumn, especially as EA has just extended its deal with FIFA to keep publishing games based on the licence until at least 2022. What comes as more of a shock is the fact this generation-straddling version of the game will be running on a brand new engine on Xbox One. EA’s fancy new Ignite technology will be powering all of EA Sports’ output from now on, it seems, while the Xbox 360 is stuck with more rudimentary tech. Ignite will give AI players “human-like intelligence,” EA claims a teeny bit optimistically, before going on to boast of “ten times greater animation fidelity” and much more detailed environments. Crowds in particular will be improved by Ignite, the publisher says. But then EA always promises that; the sad truth is that spectators are forever doomed to lag behind the player characters whom all the fancy new processing power is lavished upon.



Thief

Pub Square Enix | **Dev** Eidos Montreal | **Release** 2014

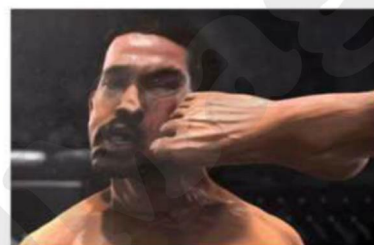
Another game that was obviously coming out on Xbox One before we officially knew there was such a thing. Stephane D'Astous, general manager at Eidos Montreal, claims "the next generation of home consoles allow us to create the best and the most immersive *Thief* game ever." Thanks to stunning real-time shadows, Garrett's comeback should look very pretty indeed.



Assassin's Creed IV

Pub Ubisoft | **Dev** Ubisoft Montreal | **Release** Winter

Black Flag was bound to appear on Xbox One and Xbox 360, and after *Assassin's Creed 3*'s occasional, undeniable performance issues, especially in cities we're rather excited at the prospect of playing an extra-pretty and super-smooth version of Edward Kenway's piratical adventure on our new console.



UFC

Pub EA | **Dev** EA Sports | **Release** 2014

UFC will be a serious test of the new Ignite tech's ability to handle advanced animation. *UFC*'s unpredictable mix of combat styles can make for unusual match-ups between fighters of different builds relying on very distinct techniques, after all. That aside, *UFC* should showcase Ignite's capacity for realistic models - look out for extra-sweaty, grapples and bone-cracking close-ups.

XBOX 360 PREVIEWS

For more screenshots and the latest info, visit www.xbox.com

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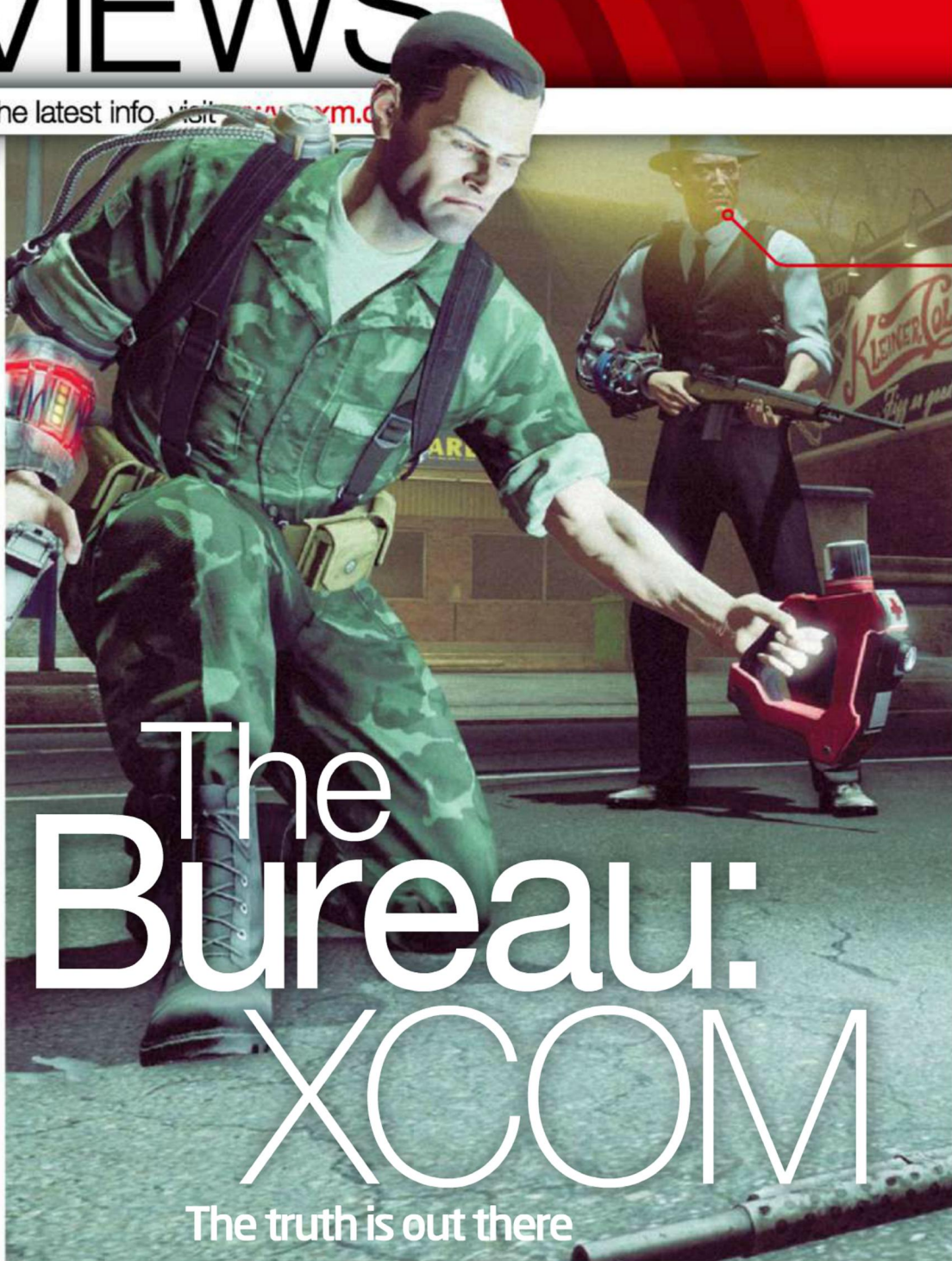
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The Bureau: XCOM

The truth is out there

A 'third-person squad-based strategic shooter' is a mouthful of a game description, but after so many years in development with numerous drastic revisions (not least the switch from a first to third-person view), *The Bureau: XCOM Declassified* probably needs that extra bit of clarification right now.

Our hands-on begins with agent William Carter reporting for duty at the XCOM Emergency HQ, 47 days after the initial alien invasion and a little way into the campaign.

Surrounded by banks of bulky computers, a map of America dotted with glowing red hotspots pinpoints troubled areas in need of your attention. This serves as the game's mission hub, from which you can plan your next move against the encroaching alien threat. You can choose from Minor Operations, which are optional side missions that level up your squad and offer them new equipment, and Recon Missions, which you can send squad members on while you tackle problems elsewhere. Finally, Critical Missions are necessary to progress the story, ▶▶

Release
23 Aug

"To survive, you'll have to change outfits more often than your average drag cabaret"
Lightning Returns, and she's dressed to kill, p55

ENEMY CONTROL

Though your squad is limited to two teammates on the field at any time, you can call on other characters to assist you with Battle Mode. In our demo, DaSilva sniped enemies from the radio tower's roof, and would detonate rigged explosives whenever we issued the command. The trick was in using our squad to flush enemies towards a bomb before setting it off.

Info

Publisher 2K Games
Developer 2K Marin
Players 1
Co-op None

State of play

Bring them!
Looks great
Looking good
Shaping up
Need to work!

CLOSE ENCOUNTERS

Those familiar with *XCOM* will see many familiar unfriendly faces in *The Bureau*. We came up against Sectoids, Outsiders, Silacoids, Elites and Mutons, and each brought their own tactics. Silacoids and Sectoids, for example, were little more than meat shields, and were better faced with a tightly packed team. Mutons are better handled when caught in a crossfire.

Declassified



DaSilva is struck down by the sleepwalker virus.





"There's a lot to feel hopeful for, as long as the mechanical kinks are ironed out"



Ammo comes in both regular and laser flavours.



Happy Homecoming! Oh... wait...

and the one we embark upon tasks us with locating Bureau agent and devastatingly sharp dresser Nico DaSilva, who's gone MIA in smalltown USA.

The locations are exactly what you'd expect to accompany a 1960's Americana setting; a backyard barbecue, a garage stuffed with Ford Thunderbirds, a parking lot, a radio station. The visuals, however, bear some telltale signs of the game's troubled production: Carter's facial animations are twitchy, and there are a few too many texture pop-ins throughout. Still, it's fun to wander around, sightsee, and spot secretive signs of the undercover invasion. Soon enough, though, we cross paths with the alien usurpers themselves, and prepare for our first firefight.

Alien assault

Pushing B activates Battle Mode, which slows time and brings up a squad wheel to allow you to issue commands. It's here that one of the game's combat inspirations becomes apparent, as controlling Carter's team will feel familiar to anyone who's ever

started a fight in *Mass Effect*. You can choose two squad mates from a total of four types of agent: Commando, Support, Recon and Engineer. Each type comes with their own abilities, equipment and perks, which are unlocked as they level up. Abilities offered by our team include Pulse Wave, which pushes enemies back to give your allies a bit of breathing room, Fire Strike, which calls in a localised attack from the air, and Shield Sphere, which protects the team inside a force field for a limited time.



Carter looking suave as he fights in a fedora.

GONE FOR GOOD

Try not to get too attached to your squad - The Bureau wouldn't be an *XCOM* game without the constant threat of permanent death. If they fall in battle, you'll have a limited time in which to reach and revive them. Should you fail, they're gone forever. It puts you at a disadvantage for the remainder of the current mission, but you'll be able to recruit and level up new squad members thereafter. Remember, a lackey is for life, not just for invasions.



Certain abilities can also be combined for more deadly assaults. For example, Carter's Lift move can be used on an Engineer's laser turret to give the weapon a better vantage point to take down surrounding enemies. The combat is enjoyable, if familiar, but at present getting in and out of cover feels far too sticky, with Carter obstinately hugging any available wall even when you're trying to move him elsewhere.

The Bureau: XCOM Declassified is shaping up, but as a whole it doesn't feel quite there yet. A mere four months from release this could be cause for concern, but there's still a lot to feel hopeful for here, provided a few mechanical kinks are ironed out. As it stands, however, it could be a very close encounter.

Aoife Wilson

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Splinter Cell Blacklist

Multiplayer stealth remastered

As the sun beats down over an abandoned factory, we find ourselves crouching behind a broken-down truck, wondering how this scene in *Splinter Cell Blacklist* is going to go down. After some deliberation, our demo partner – playing as Sam Fisher – breaks left, slinking into the nearest building. Once inside, it takes just a moment for the guard posted outside to be grabbed by the throat, hauled through the open window, and quietly knocked out.

The ruthless efficiency happens just in time, too – a sniper's laser sight sweeps over the spot where the guard used to be, reminding us that any false moves could cost us. At this point, we set to work; as Isaac Briggs, we launch a small UAV equipped with a stun gun to take out the sniper who's set up residence in the tower across the courtyard. In short order, the remote-controlled copter has zapped the rifleman into submission, allowing us to rendezvous with our buddy and move inside the building.

Of the 14 co-op missions in *Blacklist*, we're tackling one of the most difficult. Its sunny setting requires us to time our attacks with our co-op partner precisely,

to ensure we don't set off any of the alarms during the stealth-only mission. One slip-up, and we're done. Moments of frustration crop up as we work our way through the level with the looming spectre of instant failure shadowing us.

But the successful moments of teamwork balance the tension – like when Briggs shoots out a light with his silenced pistol, and Fisher quickly climbs past the formerly lit spot to hang from a sewer pipe on the ceiling. Then there are the simultaneous takedowns, which you can set up via the Mark and Execute system, that also add a measure of satisfaction to our efforts to push forward.

Longer, story-centric missions also exist – like the second of our two co-op missions, which involves sneaking into an Indian missile plant to prevent Russian spy agency Voron from stealing a nuclear warhead. Rather than focus on a single location and give the pair of secret agents the ability to figure things out, this one's a more linear, directed mission. We easily sneak past a group of guards, zap a few snipers guarding the entrance of the facility, and stroll right into the plant – then run right into the Vorons. That's when things get messy. No skulking about here; the Russians want a fight,

Release
23 Aug

LIGHT VS DARK

Blacklist introduces a new lighting system into Spies vs. Mercs. Now, when spies back into the shadows, they disappear nearly completely, rather than simply becoming harder to see. Gunslingers needn't fret too much, though. They only have to shine their flashlight in their general direction, and they'll light up bright as day and scuttle away like filthy spy cockroaches.



and we give it to them. Dropping our silenced pistols and tasers in favour of assault rifles and magnums, we go to war – and have it proven to us that this *Splinter Cell* will provide ample variety.

Blacklist also marks the return of Spies vs. Mercs. Missing-in-action since 2006's *Double Agent*, the asymmetrical multiplayer mode sees the Spies controlled from the third-person perspective, whereas the Mercs put you in first-person shooter mode, which significantly hinders your vision but hands you far superior firepower. It's the Spies' job to use their mobility and vision to get to and hack consoles, while the Mercs attempt to stave off their infiltration by investigating every inch of each map.

Previously a 2v2 affair, *Blacklist* offers its own twist on the mode. Now, up to eight players can play on maps and can even customise their loadouts, something not available in previous *Splinter Cells*. Also, spies can now utilise a pinging ability that lets them know where the opposing gunmen are; the Mercs, however, can go right back at them via their UAVs and EMP grenades. It all feels much more chaotic and intense than ever before. Four players per side means far more firefights, backstabs, and general insanity. Of course, the original mode still exists, but for those who want something more fast-paced, *Blacklist*'s changes are for you.

Taylor Cocke



Nice pointing your torch the wrong way, loser.

Spies vs Mercs: Splinter Cell Blacklist

Info

Publisher Ubisoft
Developer
Ubisoft Toronto
Players 1-10
Co-op 2 players

State of play

Being busy!

Looks great

Looking good

Shaping up

Not bad at all

A NEW OLD SAM

You'll recognise bits of Sam from all over the place. He's got his goggles back, like classic Sam, but he's being played by a new actor, not Michael Ironside. Mark and Execute, Sam's ability to tag and take down multiple enemies, has held over from *Conviction*, and *Spies vs Mercs* has been brought back from *Double Agent*. It all feels like there's been some quality cherry-picking going on.

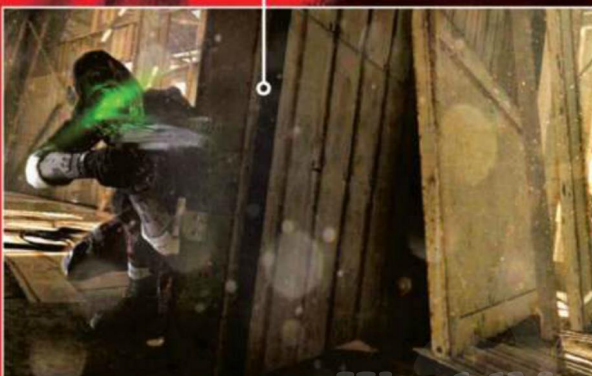
"Silenced pistols, tasers, assault rifles and magnums – there's ample variety"

CLASSIC OR BLACKLIST?

You can leap into the *Spies vs Mercs* games from the same world map that takes you into the single-player and co-op campaign missions. You'll get a choice of Classic or Blacklist. Classic is that intimate two vs two that you'll remember from *Double Agent*. Blacklist is a 4v4 variant, in which tight intimacy is replaced with classes and customisations. All modes earn currency for those extra gadgets.



Spies and Mercs kicked off in *Pandora Tomorrow*.



Ah, the old "shoot him in the arse". A classic.

Info

Publisher
Telltale Games
Developer
Telltale Games
Players 1
Co-op None

State of play

Bit of a mess!
Looks great
Looking good
Highly engaging
Needs a bit more work

The Wolf Among Us

Who's afraid? We sure aren't

The word "drama" isn't one we'd associate with most games, but it's what made *The Walking Dead* series impossible to put down.

Telltale's next episodic adventure, based on DC's comic *Fables*, looks to capture the same riveting conflict in the face of danger.

In *Fables*, fairy-tale characters such as Prince Charming, Cinderella, and Bluebeard – having fled their homelands after an invasion by a mysterious adversary – are now secretly living in our world, in a place in New York called Fabletown. There, sheriff Bigby (once The Big Bad Wolf), deputy mayor Ichabod Crane, and mayor's assistant Snow White keep the peace while helping

their brethren survive unnoticed by normal humans, or "mundanes".

Maintaining order is harder than it sounds when Prince Charming is a crafty womaniser and Goldilocks a militant activist. Thankfully, you're the perfect person to enforce the law. You play as Bigby, who's reformed (and taken human form) since his days of stalking Red

Riding Hood and blowing down houses. A murder's occurred in Fabletown and you're investigating.

Though *Wolf Among Us* is by no means a *Walking Dead* clone, it shares some broad similarities. One is the importance of your relationships with the people around you – especially Snow White, who Bigby has undeclared feelings for at the comic's outset. Expect plenty of crucial decisions, with consequences that'll affect the story. Not only will you have the same kind of stressful timed decisions that *Walking Dead* fans grew to love, but some events will occur simultaneously, so if you go to Location A to interview someone, you may miss the chance to gather evidence at Location B.

To reflect Bigby's badass status, the combat sequences will give you more



Comic book-style locations should satisfy *Fables* fans.

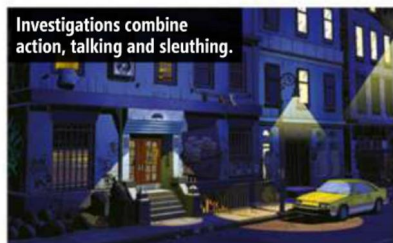


Little pig Colin still has his original form.

control and fighting ability than the simple button-prompts and analog-stick wiggles of *The Walking Dead*. As the former Big Bad Wolf, you'll be able to shift into werewolf form and deliver major beatdowns – even steering the fight toward props to use on your opponent. You'll be able to take lots of damage, but if you're roughed-up, you'll display physical signs of it.

Though we haven't seen the game in action yet, we like the direction Telltale is taking it. If it's as good as *Walking Dead*'s first season, we'll be counting the days between instalments.

Corey Cohen



Investigations combine action, talking and sleuthing.

» Info

Publisher Square Enix
Developer Square Enix
Players 1
Co-op None

State of play

Must buy!
Can't wait

Looking good

Shaping up

Needs work



The clothes you're wearing at the point of victory decide your victory animation. Some are annoyingly sexy.

Lightning Returns: Final Fantasy XIII

Breaking rules about what makes a Final Fantasy game

A short hands-on with *Lightning Returns* is only partially enlightening. There are bits of plot, familiar and new. Like we already knew, Lightning has 13 days to save the world. But during the combat tutorial, the countdown clock is at seven days, which implies an out-of-game demo, or a bit more darting around the ol' apocalypse timeline. Hope Estheim is our returning demigod's voice-in-the-ear, and Snow has risen, seemingly against his will, to be a kind of benevolent dictator of the city.

But aside from the training monsters, the only new character interaction is

She can't really lose with a sword that big.



Lumina. She appears in a black shroud of chaos - the result of two worlds colliding, and the stuff that's stopped people aging for 500 years. When Lightning sees her, there's an awkward stare down. Humans can't exist in Chaos, or see into the pockets, so Lightning and Lumina instantly know they're encountering someone extraordinary. In Lightning's case, she's wearing the saviour's clothes, given to her by the ancient god Bhunivelze. Lumina's deal is less clear - although she does summon a massive dragon.

Lightning fights alone, but with her god-given garb, she's a power-dressing one-woman army with a hot-swapping combat wardrobe. Each outfit has four customisable attacks mapped to the face buttons, and you can put any attack on any dress - including physical attacks on the Sorceress outfit. The

menu was disabled in the demo, so we couldn't explore what makes an efficient build. You have three outfits equipped, and each performs a certain number of attacks every so often. To survive, you'll need to change outfits more often than a drag cabaret.

While the combo system is retired, a modified form of "staggering" survives. Previous *XIII* games adapted your characters' auto-attacks as you learned more about your enemies. No attacks are automatic now, so you have to

remember your enemies' weaknesses. Continuously hit those spots, and you'll see an erratic heartbeat monitor appearing under their health bar.

Keep it up, and they'll stagger, giving Lightning a chance to deliver heavy damage to a prone enemy. With the bosses, getting that stagger (and not wasting it) is essential.

This is the biggest break with *Final Fantasy*'s traditional combat in the game's history. Our short demo didn't give any insight into the more intricate tactics open to Lightning, and we're still not sure she's charismatic enough to be the series' first solo lead. But this trilogy-closer throws out so many rules, we're excited about seeing if it works.

Jon Blyth

"Be a darling and wait while I change outfits."



Armored Core: Verdict Day

Building a better bot

The *Armored Core* series has never been particularly welcoming to newcomers. A mech-based action franchise with a focus on tactical strategy, dizzying customisation, and more menus and stats than story elements, it's always seemed better suited to the mouse-and-keyboard crowd than console gamers.

While *Armored Core V* addressed this by introducing more accessible action, its focus on competitive online play still served to alienate all but the most faithful fans. *Verdict Day* continues down the multiplayer path, but complements this with a new feature aiming to ease rookies into the fray.

Using what From Software dubs the "UNAC System", you can now build teams of AI-controlled units and take them into battle against physical players. So, if you don't have a handful of friends familiar with the game, you now have the option of filling empty slots with AI UNACs. More than just bots, these player-created terminators are super-smart and improve their performance the more they're used.

UNACs also support a user-friendly mode that allows newcomers to get the lay of the land without ever setting foot on the battlefield. Viewing the

action from an overhead perspective and armed with a targeting reticle, budding mech pilots can play the role of commander, controlling their UNACs in an RTS-flavoured fashion.

Release
Autumn

On top of ushering a new audience into the *Armored Core* universe, the UNAC system boasts plenty of appeal for AC vets. The units are highly customisable, encouraging experienced players to tinker with them endlessly - parts can be mixed and matched to craft near-infinite numbers of personalised mechs. Additionally, those building squads of both UNACs and physical players will be able to leverage strategic layers not open to teams composed entirely of people or AIs.

Armored Core will likely never embrace the casual gamer completely, but *Verdict Day* could at least make playing it less complicated than reading a mech's user manual.

Matt Cabral



Tall buildings can be used as cover.



Strategically study battle replays on the World Menu.



The UNAC system will appeal to newbies and pros.



That's going to be a whole lot of mess.



Black Mask has put a \$50m bounty on Bats' head.

Info

Publisher Warner Bros.
Developer WB Games Montreal
Players 1
Co-op TBC

State of play

Bring them!

Look's great

Cracking good

Shooting at

Needing more

Batman: Arkham Origins

Gotham isn't beyond saving. But can someone other than Rocksteady do it?

Arkham Origins takes place on the night when Batman leaves his petty thug-catching days behind and becomes the Batman, scourge of Gotham's masked criminals, courtesy of a Bat-hunt masterminded by Black Mask. Before this night Batman wasn't officially the Batman we know and love. But the pile of unconscious bodies we leave in our wake after our opening bout of Freeflow combat suggests otherwise.

We're playing Arkham Origins and while there are plenty of differences to focus on - the Christmassy pre-Arkham Gotham looks fresh, there's now fast-travel courtesy of the Batwing and the detective sections have been overhauled - the most important point is highlighting how much *hasn't* changed.

Kevin Conroy's still on voice duty, and though we're a rookie Batman, combat feels no different to Arkham City's.



The playable world is now huge.

We're able to effortlessly knock out almost ten goons with double-counters and acrobatic fists, while stealth takedowns, grapnel-boost gliding and distance glide kicks see us render even more unconscious as we zip around the city.

It's important to underline this because, as we reported last issue, WB Games Montreal is developing in place of Rocksteady. Our demo's barely 20 minutes long but it lays any early fears to rest: *Origins* feels like it belongs in the series.

Its new features also impress. The Dark Knight system is a Batcomputer-monitored combat training tool that rates and rewards in-game fighting while urging you to try more creative combos as you improve. In place of

Riddler challenges, Most Wanted and Crime in Progress dangle side-story and quest carrots in front of you to coax you away from the 'eight DC assassins' journey to Gotham to kill Batman' story.

But if it's excitement you want then it's hard to look beyond the city itself; not least because it's doubled in size. Arkham City's world's back in its entirety, and in its pre-asylum guise it's less run down and the docklands aren't flooded. It's now joined by the island of New Gotham - a skyscraper-filled commercial zone where vertical gameplay takes centre stage. From our initial play, it's exactly the Gotham we heroes deserve to close the generation.

Matthew Pellett



GCPD's SWAT team is as villainous as the thugs.



Combat retains all of Arkham City's mechanical upgrades.

Info

Publisher Capcom
Developer Spark Unlimited
Players 1-16
Co-op None

State of play

Getting away!
Looks great
Looking good
Shaping up
Needs to be heard

HIT THE MARK

Initial arenas in Akrid Survival will have team members working together to take down waves of the aggressive Akrid. Successfully overcoming these will unlock the way ahead, where the opposing teams come together in a final arena and vie for control of a marked zone. Teamwork, reviving fallen comrades and successive kills are rewarded with XP, upgrades and in-match rewards.

SNOW PIRATES

1676

TIME TO NEXT ZONE IN...

CAPCOM 01

AKRID SURVIVAL
Exterminate the creatures

Lost Planet 3

Heading out into the wide blue yonder

Stranded on the surface of E.D.N. III, the first thing that strikes you is how blue it is. It's an eternal azure expanse, punctuated only by *Lost Planet*'s ubiquitous lashings of orange, and it takes the eyes some time to adjust.

According to Capcom, this blue represents a bold new frontier. As producer Andrew Szymanski describes it: "This is the planet in its most natural state." Taking control of Nevec new recruit Jim Peyton, you're a pioneer, trailblazing your way around previously uncharted terrain. It's man vs. wild, and Jim has no qualms about upsetting the natural order if it means mining as much of that sweet thermal energy as is humanly possible. Unfortunately, that T-Eng resides within aggressive indigenous creatures the Akrid. Every job comes with the odd occupational hazard.

Capcom and Spark Unlimited readily admit a strong focus on *LP3*'s single-player story, but their multiplayer is also looking promising, as we found out in

our hands-on. One mission in Scenario mode saw our Nevec team escorting a battlecat mech to the perimeter of a snow pirate security centre, while the defending Snow Pirates had to prevent us from completing our objective. Their attacks stop the battlecat in its tracks, requiring Nevec to get in close to repair it while avoiding heavy gunfire.

During these skirmishes, random rigs can be found and used to chase down on-foot opponents and former oppressors in satisfying, though somewhat one-sided showdowns. The Alpha Lair map, sees both teams competing side by side to destroy large and aggressive Akrid. Once the beasts fall, teams have to harvest their energy in a single vessel, then convey it to their individual extraction point in an intense capture-the-capsule-style tussle.

Akrid Survival, a *Lost Planet* take on Horde mode, begins with two teams separately taking down waves of Akrid in parallel arenas. The first room is filled with small flying enemies, easily dispatched. Room two holds the more challenging scorpion-flavoured enemies. The last area sees both teams coming together for an explosive finale where we vie for domination of a control zone. Although these maps are twists on popular formulas, they're novel enough to still be exciting to play.

The heady intensity of these multiplayer modes, combined with the stronger story focus of the single-player, point to reasons to be cheerful as the game's release date approaches. With any luck by that stage it'll be just the planet, and not the players, that are left feeling blue.

Aoife Wilson

"E.D.N. III's vast blue expanse represents a bold new frontier"

Release
30 Aug



If in doubt, empty your clip into the orange bits.



WARMING UP

Lost Planet 3 promises a wider range of Akrid than the previous two games. Heavily-armoured Dongos and the swarming, skittering Sepias are among returning enemies, but Capcom has promised a more diverse ecosystem on E.D.N. III, with more 'mammal-like' Akrid, such as the pack hunters, providing some variation in the series' traditionally insect-based race.



Now this is a stand-off you simply won't win.



MECH A DIFFERENCE

The presence of mechs in Scenario mode mean that the tables can easily turn at any given moment, and revenge against players who repeatedly and mercilessly killed you can be very sweet indeed. Mechs hit harder, but they also move and turn much slower than players on foot, meaning that if the opposing team work together, they can take them apart quite quickly from afar.

"Jim's a pioneer, trailblazing around previously uncharted terrain"

LP3 rigs are mainly used by miners, not military.



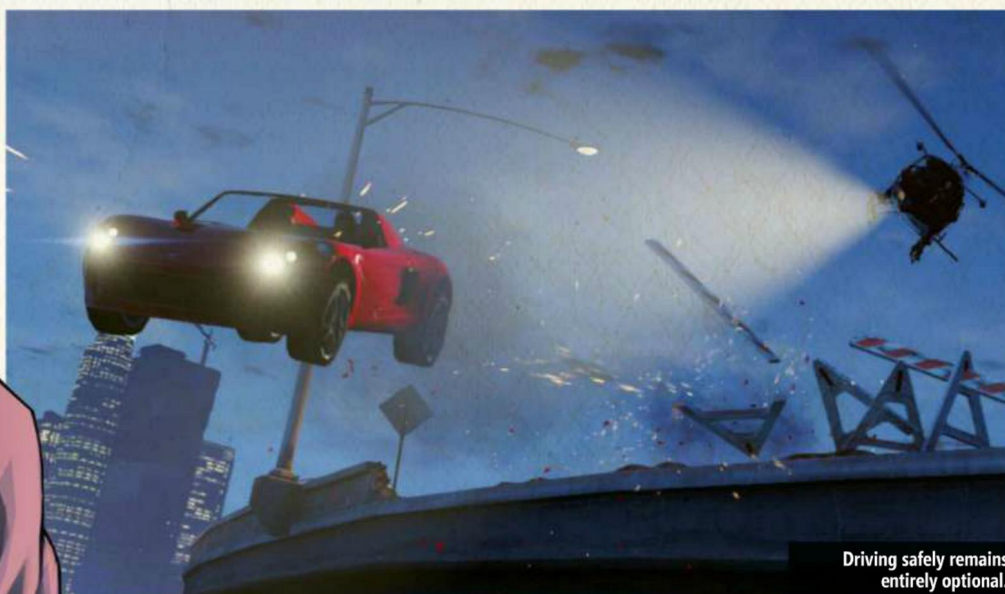
XBOX 360 FEATURE

Words: Jon Hicks

CITY OF DREAMS

A tour of Grand Theft Auto V shows off Rockstar's biggest, most detailed world yet





Writing about *Grand Theft Auto* poses a problem. Normally, for these first glimpses of a game, we have to watch somebody else play it, then ask them questions. Often, they aren't interesting questions. Is it all on rails like this? Does the character change at all? That dialogue isn't final, is it? Oh. Really?

With *GTA V*, our first glimpse comes from several thousand feet above faux-California, plummeting from a helicopter. There are planes in the sky, skyscrapers on one horizon, a military base on another. As we get closer to the ground, we see grazing animals in the countryside. Distant quad-bikes tear along a gravel track; two men fish next to a camper-van parked next to a mountain stream. Dive into the ocean and you can see the fish, too.

There's so much to ask questions about, you start to sound like an overly inquisitive toddler. Can you go anywhere? (Yes, and from the outset – the world won't be restricted like *GTA IV*'s). Are there any constraints on diving? (No, certain boats will have scuba gear and you can explore any part of the seabed.) When you aren't controlling the three characters, will they live their lives without you? (Yes, basically.)

So let's start from the beginning: you control the three central characters, Franklin, Michael and Trevor (see *The Power of Three*, p64), who are three very different career criminals. In some missions they work together – as a pair or as a trio

– but in some they don't, and away from missions you can flip between them (via a *Driver: San Francisco*-style jump up into a satellite view, then back down with only a handful of seconds' pause) entirely as you like. It's an ambitious concept, combining three radically different narratives into a single grand story, and paired with its biggest ever setting, says Rockstar with typical self-confidence, it's the ultimate open-world game.

Ocean drive

To demonstrate, once our parachutist Franklin is on the deck, we flick over to Trevor. He's coming to in his Y-fronts on a beach surrounded by dead bikers – a cameo, if you can have such a thing post-mortem, from the Lost gang of *GTA IV*'s *Lost and Damned* DLC. He's taken for a quick blast along the coast in nearby boat, showing off Rockstar's fancy new water effects, and the density of life both above the waves – jet skis, fishermen, people relaxing on the beach – and below, with shoals of fish and other divers bustling around while sharks circle a sunken container ship.

Such pleasures can be experienced with any of the three characters, although their prowess will differ. Each character has a set of vital statistics which list their ability in (deep breath) shooting, strength, stealth, flying, driving, mechanical ability and lung capacity. These are all boosted by practice, *Skyrim*-style, which gives you points to spend on upgrades – although each of them comes with certain strengths as standard. Ex-pilot Trevor has the edge in flying, so he's the best choice if you want to knock off a helicopter. You can still do it with Franklin, but it'll be harder to fly.

On top of these, each man gets a special skill. Trevor's is, not entirely surprisingly, melee: he does double damage and takes half damage. Michael gets bullet time, and Franklin gets a sort of petrol-



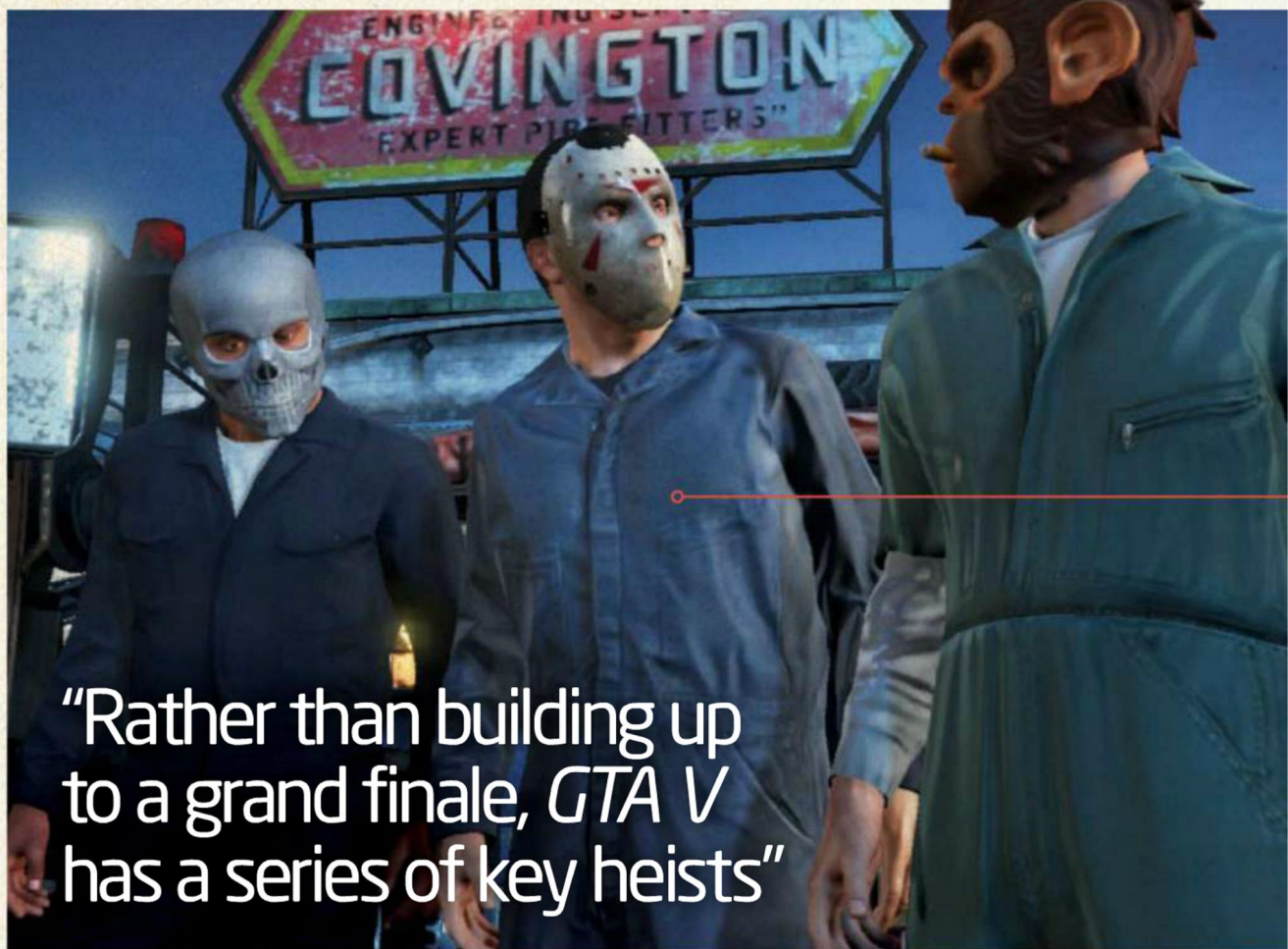
Details

Publisher Rockstar
Developer Rockstar
Players TBC
Co-op TBC
Released 17 Sep

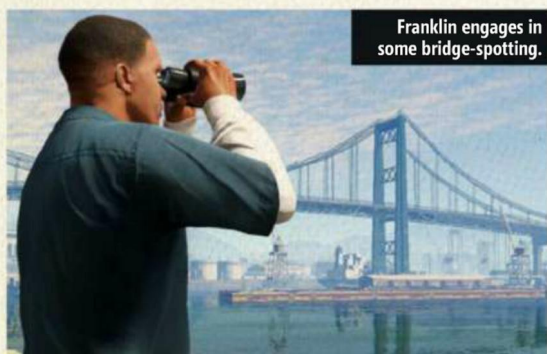




XBOX 360 **FEATURE**



"Rather than building up to a grand finale, *GTA V* has a series of key heists"



Franklin engages in some bridge-spotting.



Look forward to some off-road biking.



A deranged loner, underwater.



HEIST TO MEET YOU What to expect from GTA V's multiplayer

There will be multiplayer, and it will be "a brand new approach to open-world multiplayer", and that's all Rockstar is prepared to say. Given the campaign's enthusiasm for heists, and the company's assertion that the 'gangs' system included with *Max Payne 3* will carry over to *GTA*, we suspect this might take the form of rival gangs battling to complete the same heist, or one defending an attack by the other.

It's not hard to see how it would work: *GTA IV*'s 'Cops and Robbers' was its best multiplayer mode, enabling glorious running battles even with only two on each side. A large-scale objective with big teams would bring human cunning to *GTA V*'s heists, with the

city's ever-present inhabitants bringing a dash of unpredictability. More excitingly, and more deserving of the never-before-seen billing, this could be handled by letting you enter the games of others without waiting around in lobbies, as has been promised by *Watch Dogs*. The way multiplayer is included – as the fourth option on the character select wheel you use to switch between Franklin, Trevor and Michael – suggests it's going to be easy to get online. With the release date only three months away, expect new details soon.



We expect to be picking out custom lids.



All so peaceful, until the helicopter comes.



ON CALL

The heist we're shown is all planned by Michael on his smartphone, which is one of the game's main tools. As well as being the primary source of information, detailing all potential missions, you are also able to use it to access the all-new in-game internet, connect to each character's friends and email, and take your own pictures to upload to Rockstar's Social Club service.

infused variant that means he can slow time when driving in order to nail that perfect corner. These resources will be precious and should not be overused, says Rockstar – and they could shift the balance on which character you use for a particular mission or challenge.

The story itself is unusually flexible for *GTA*, too. Rather than the traditional build-up to a grand and often exhausting finale, here there's a series of key heists to complete. Instead of just cranking up the number of enemies and leaving you to get on with it, Rockstar promises more genuine flexibility – your preparation can include hiring gangs to assist (the cheaper the gang, the less talented, although pricier outfits are more likely to survive and demand their cut of the takings) and even deciding to use stealth rather than violence.

Heating up

Rockstar isn't prepared to show these in their full glory yet, but it does show a little light robbery – also previously seen in 1995 film *Heat*, it turns out – to give an example of how the three main characters can work together. Michael lifted the basic idea for this heist from his beloved movies – using a truck to ram an armoured car – and has previously sourced both truck and a road-blocking dustcart, stashed a getaway vehicle, and invested in some masks and overalls for the three of them.

It's a simple setup, switching from Michael in the dustcart to Franklin in the ramming truck, but the police reaction is swift and rapidly escalates. The officers wade in Horde Mode-style, and the squad have to pick them off. The switching between characters is quicker, here – a swift camera pop in and back – and a good thing too, as it's possible for AI-controlled

characters to be killed without your guiding hand on their trigger finger.

Hustling between Trevor on the roof with a sniper rifle, Franklin on the ground with his machine gun, and Michael somewhere in between, it's a different take on the sieges we've seen in other titles; while you can apparently do it all in one character the different skills and positions make for a more successful, and certainly more satisfying, takedown. Switching back to someone on the roof to discover that they've whipped out an RPG means that the guy on the ground suddenly has a lot less to worry about.

When it's all over, all that's left is for Franklin to dump the truck in that previously-selected getaway spot and toss some CSI-thwarting C4 at it. Quite an undertaking just to knock off a security truck, all told, and this is one of the less complex missions – the main story heists promise to be far more elaborate. It remains to be seen how flexible they'll be in supporting widely different playstyles, but Rockstar takes care to point out that you'll get a detailed breakdown of the payout at the end that suggests they're being built for replay, and we're expecting them to be the backbone of the new multiplayer features (see Heist to Meet You, above).

At the very least, you can expect a set of Horde Mode-esque set-pieces to arrive soon after you start playing, rather than after ten hours of criminal busywork, and the cash you earn sounds like it'll be a lot more consequential than just

We didn't meet Nervous Ron, but he looks like one of Trevor's chums.



Just another day in south Los Santos.



XBOX 360 FEATURE

MEN ON THE STREET

The cast are greeted differently by the inhabitants of Los Santos: Franklin's more amiable, Trevor gets more abuse. It's likely, though not yet confirmed, that each character will experience different dynamic events, so wandering at night as Trevor will take you to some darker places than Michael. Events are tied into the day/night cycle, too, encouraging you to spend time in each man's shoes.

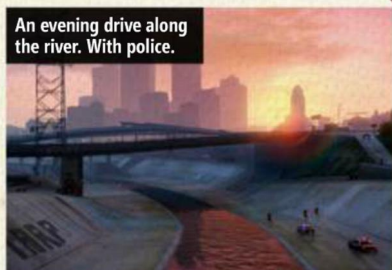


Car ownership remains a fluid business.



"We're quietly convinced this is one of the most dramatic updates *GTA* has ever had"

An evening drive along the river. With police.



THE POWER OF THREE

Meet your team from Los Santos



TREVOR

A sociopathic ex-military pilot, Trevor has prior form - he helped out with some of Michael's grand robberies back in the day. Now lives out in the sticks where he can more easily indulge his enthusiasm for violence.

FIRST SEEN:

Waking up on a beach surrounded by the bodies of dead bikers.

RESIDENCE:

Nasty-looking caravan in Blaine County.

INTERESTS: Flying, fighting, heavy drinking.

WOULD FIT INTO:

Vice City

FRANKLIN

Young, smart, ambitious and very keen on cars and racing, Franklin works as a repo man for what he believes to be a legitimate business - but he's more than happy to break the law to get ahead.

FIRST SEEN: Jumping out of a helicopter.

RESIDENCE:

South Los Santos.

INTERESTS: Cars, racing, adrenaline sports, making a name for himself.

WOULD FIT INTO:

San Andreas





Nice camera angle, but you'll crash in seconds.



That submersible looks highly mission-specific.



Some new cars join the GTA IV lineup.

Making a bank withdrawal, GTA-style.



▶ a ticker spinning in the corner. You can spend it on car customisation, weapon customisation, property and your own appearance in the form of clothing, tattoos and haircuts – so the successful heist man can expect a far better quality of life.

Tales of interest

Even if you skip the story entirely, you're unlikely to be bored. There's no dead space in Los Santos: wherever you are in the world there'll be something to do. In the city, you can do yoga, go on a bus tour of celebrity homes, or pull your car into a garage to customise it. Out in the sticks, you can pick up hitchhikers or – more traditionally for *GTA* – rob an office. There are always rewards for exploration, although Rockstar won't clarify whether these are cash, abilities, or something else. The world is overflowing with these mini-games and "dynamic missions" that appear as you explore, and promises to be a welcome change from the sort of laundry-list car theft or minor delivery jobs that fill out most open-world games.

Which isn't to say there's no room for that sort of thing, of course, as Rockstar demonstrates with one of the aforementioned dynamic missions: Michael bumps into a self-absorbed actress o'ercome with paparazzi and has to, yes, drive her home. This is more standard *GTA*, albeit with a new car (the Benefactor Surano) and the fact that the pursuing vehicles are armed with long-range lenses rather than submachineguns. It serves mainly to confirm that the Rockstar-brand social sass is in full effect, the incredulous passenger refusing to believe that Michael has never heard of her as she "tests very well in [his] demographic".

It also suggests that the car handling hasn't dramatically changed, keeping the same heft and weight that was introduced in *GTA IV*. The same can't be said of the shooting,

which we're assured is much improved. You can now more easily shoot while moving, without having to stop and aim down the gun, the ability to roll between cover, and proper free aim options alongside hard lock-on and the previously-used soft-lock.

It's still *GTA*, then, and still recognisably built from the same parts as *GTA IV*, but we're quietly convinced it's actually one of the most dramatic updates the series has ever had. From what it's shown, and what it's insinuating, Rockstar is starting to change the stories you tell in its game.

So far, every moment in the franchise has been the story of a single psychopath, and the variety comes in how the world's systems react to him. By giving you control of how the story's key moments play out,

"The world is full of mini-games and dynamic missions"

and in a much more elaborate way than *GTA IV*'s clunky "Who to kill?" story branching, Rockstar makes this far more rewarding and far more interesting to talk about – and that's only using the tools and characters it gives you in single-player.

Once you get your friends along, as the multiplayer will surely do, then Los Santos becomes a frothing cocktail of careful strategies and improvised showdowns, where great crime battles can be won and lost every night, and the victors spending their winnings on ensuring their status.

We've already seen the enthusiastic narratives people can built out of *Call of Duty*'s tightly-confined maps. Set loose in the Xbox 360's greatest sandbox, and things will get much more interesting. How well it all works is a question we'll probably have to leave until September when it finally arrives and we can all find the answers ourselves.

MICHAEL

An ex-bank robber who wrangled a new identity from his police contacts, but doesn't enjoy his new life. He's struggling to solve relationship issues, so is trying whiskey, action movies and crime instead.

FIRST SEEN: Leaving a high-end restaurant.

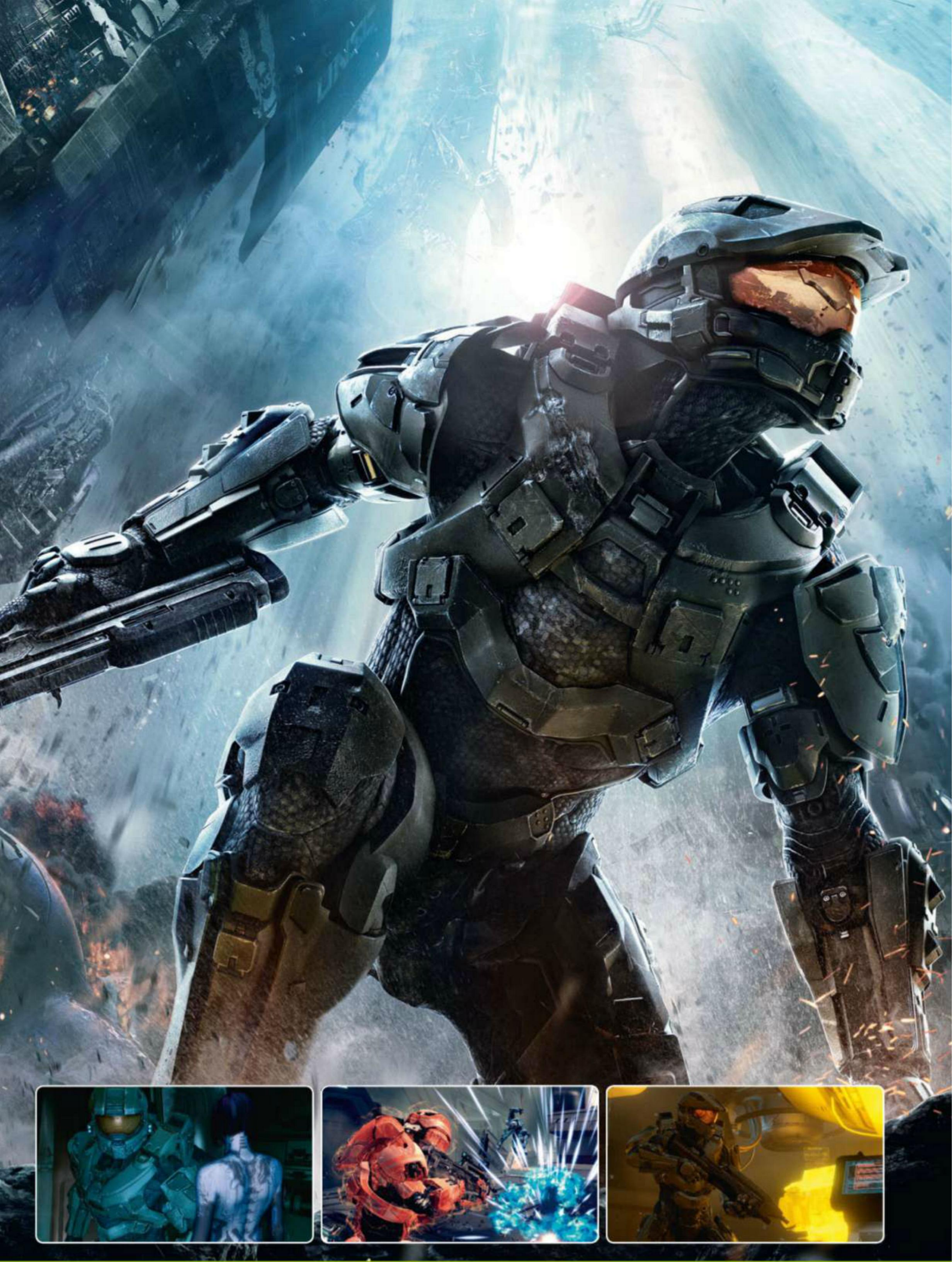
RESIDENCE:

A large mansion in Rockford Hills.

INTERESTS: Whiskey, action movies, finding something more fun than going straight.

WOULD FIT INTO: *GTA IV*





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XBOX 360 REVIEWS

The ultimate buyers' guide – the best Xbox 360 games reviewed!

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Details



Released
OUT
NOW

Publisher
Microsoft Studios
Developer
Undead Labs
Price 1,600MP (£13)
Players 1
Co-op None

State of Decay

They run, climb, and scream – but they're definitely zombies

Reviewer



Jon Blyth
OXM Log

You don't get to watch the apocalypse unfurl. The first you know of the ongoing downfall of mankind is when a grey humanoid lunges for your friend's throat. From that point on, *State of Decay* reveals itself slowly, but steadily.

After you find the safe area of the Ranger's Office, you're introduced to the idea of scavenging: rummaging through the shiny boxes of the nearby tents and sheds. You're also invited to inspect your surroundings by climbing a tower and looking around. You wouldn't know it yet, but this is an open-world game. You're

being taught how to survive. Once you leave the Ranger's Office and head to the nearby town, the game proper begins. You meet a new camp of people, and quickly (too quickly, really) go from unwelcome outsider to order-dispensing boss. But now, your access to the camp's supplies are limited by your reputation, which is earned by completing missions and bringing back supplies.

Characters you meet can be recruited, befriended or ignored, and this creates some genuinely tingling moments. Driving back from a night mission, we notice some odd zombie activity that doesn't seem related to our own activity. Seeing pan-wielding silhouettes in a house, we realise we've discovered some new people. Watching the battle and deciding whether or not to help feels like an honest decision – not forced upon us by a button prompt, not even appearing as a mission. In the end, we do help – and gain three new members

THE KNOWLEDGE

What is it?
Open-world survival and resource-management.

What's it like?
Unpolished, but still pulls off some canny tricks.

Who's it for?
People who wanted *Day Z* to have more direction.

"Unlike recent action-heavy entries in the series, *Revelations* is pure old-school horror"

Resident Evil goes back to its roots, p76



Did you know?

THE Z-WORD

"Don't say the Z-Word," said Simon Pegg in *Shaun of the Dead*, echoing decades of "infected" euphemism. *State of Decay* doesn't suffer from genre-denial. They call them zombies, and zeds – literally saying the Z-word, and the word zed.

KEEPING BUSY WHAT'LL BE OCCUPYING YOUR TIME WHEN HUMANITY ENDS



FORAGING

Resources come in three flavours: currency, such as reputation; inventory equipment, such as weapons and painkillers; then there's the bigger stuff – wood, for building up your safehouse, and medicine. You need to keep them all up and build a workshop for keeping weapons in good nick.



HOUSEKEEPING

Building up your safe area is only one of the problems – it also comes under attack from wandering mobs. We found that our companions could look after themselves in combat. But they also bicker and succumb to emotion, which can be fixed with zombie-killing side missions.



KILLING

The hordes have to be tended, like angry, biting crops. Ignore them, and they'll grow unruly, damaging morale. The small hordes may look unconvincing, but taking one on alone is suicide. Feral zombies are brutal melee fighters, and Screamer's attract attention.



Stalking and stealth is sometimes an option.



Get high up to put new places on the map.



Knock a zed over for a finisher opportunity.

TAG TEAM ACTION



The longer you stay playing as one person, the more you'll need to waste painkillers on staying healthy, and your maximum stamina will diminish. Change to another available character, and your old character'll heal in no time.

of our camp. Which is fortunate, because we're just about to kill someone in a stupidly cack-handed mission.

Ex to the Z

The Wilkinsons are a bunch of good-hearted but hostile hillbillies, and your first mission to win their trust involves defending their home from a wave of zombies. It's the game's way of forcing you to try out two things you may have ignored so far: barricading windows and explosive weapons. Unfortunately, we burn ourselves just as the zombies break in.

This allows us to find out how the game deals with death. Lose your health and you'll fall. You can revive yourself, but the longer you're down, the more you'll be wounded, lowering your

maximum health and leaving you prone to further knockdowns. Get back to camp, and you can take control of another character and let the damaged character rest. With no checkpoints or save games, death is permanent.

If you die, you'll find yourself transported back to the camp,



XBOX LIVE

There's nothing online here. It's a single-player experience, and it's not really the kind of game that would suit leaderboards. Still, you don't need to gloat, do you? Don't be so needy.



You'll find people – but are they good people?



Barricading a house gives time to Molotov.



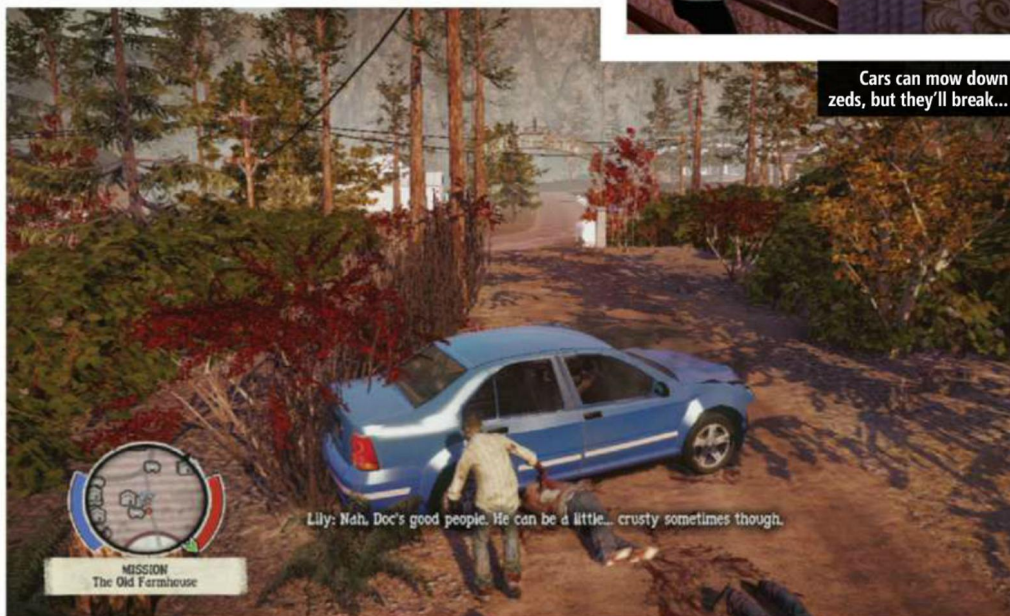
Don't enrage a horde while alone and on foot.

GETTING STRONGER



Your characters all have a number of basic stats that govern their hitting power, stamina and scavenging abilities. They all get better with use – so if you find yourself at a loose end, you can boost your max stamina by jogging around the house a few times. With bullets feeling a little precious, we limited one of our characters to levelling their shooting skill. However, there are other stats, peculiar to certain characters. Leadership gives you a loyalty bonus, and Powerhouse lets you deliver more devastating finishers. And when you find a certain sleazy chef, you might find he has a couple of abilities like "Cooking" and "Sexting". We'll leave those to your imagination. One area that's a little confusing is the "Fighting" stat. Reaching Level 3 unlocks a post-dodge counter attack, but the unlocks at Levels 5 and 7 are vaguely worded, and vary from one character to the next. Levelling up feels good – it always does. But we're not sure being the max Level 7 makes you that much more deadly.

where the death of a camp member will hit morale. This leads to a range of side-missions. Is someone sad? Take them out on a hunting mission and kill some zombies the old-fashioned way. Is someone angry? Take them out on a hunting mission and kill some zombies the old-fashioned way. Recruit everyone you meet, and you might end up having to evict trouble-causers. Undead Labs' open-world ambition has exceeded its ability to create non-repeating dialogue, but dedicated gamers will have a high tolerance to bad writing, and it's not too far below the average.



Cars can mow down zeds, but they'll break...

State of Decay doesn't look great, and the combat is very simple. But this isn't a game about light-heavy combos, it's about weathering the world, creeping around areas, worrying about your health, and having a home location that's full of wounded and tired people.

Resources are a constant concern: building materials to build extensions and upgrades to your house; food to, erm, eat; morale, which dwindles as people bicker, and rises as missions are progressed. Cars are limited, but it's still really tempting to damage them driving through hordes. Medicine helps you heal those who've been knocked down in battle, and Reputation can be swapped for weapons and painkillers. There's always something to consider, and stand still for too long, and world missions will come in. Doing nothing isn't an option.

State of Decay isn't a polished product, but it still manages to shine. The graphics are chunky, the lighting unsubtle, and there are occasional clipping issues. But that doesn't kill the atmosphere.

The maps aren't terribly large, but the city areas are densely packed – to the point where the mini-map becomes useless, beyond the waypoint compass.

The system that generates conversations between different characters frequently doesn't ring true, and you'll find yourself suddenly allied to someone, without explanation, who looks like a bad guy. But you'll also have endearing moments where a certain unexpected occurrence does have an appropriate line scripted for it, and that's enough to win you around. It's by no means perfect, but Undead Labs has won itself a high level of forgiveness, with an atmospheric world that's as compelling as it is flawed.

XBOX 360 VERDICT

- Largely convincing world
- Sense of community
- Tense survival tingles
- Samey combat
- Lots of rough edges

THE SCORE
A great game for the
forgiving Z-enthusiast

7

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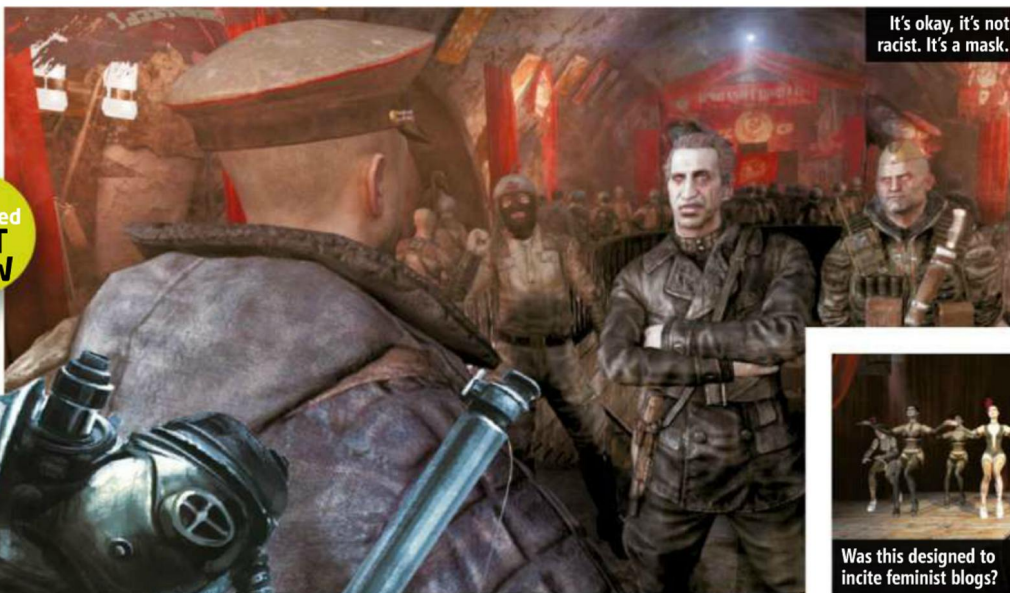
We're also available on Zinio for Android and PC, although without these features. Find out more at zinio.com/officialxbox.

Details

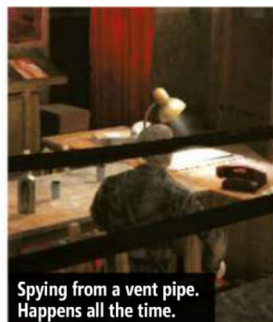


Released
**OUT
NOW**

Publisher Deep Silver
Developer 4A Games
Price £44.99
Players 1
Co-op None



It's okay, it's not racist. It's a mask.



Spying from a vent pipe. Happens all the time.



Was this designed to incite feminist blogs?

Metro: Last Light

Nazis and commies in a nuclear mutant apocalypse. Hit it...

Reviewer



Jon Blyth
OXM Log

We're not sure how the writing in *Metro* games pulls it off. Lines like "Now I am in real spider-infested catacombs, where the general secretary does not look like the head spider" feel like they've been spat into a database by a drunk Google Translate. But they're delivered with sincerity in thick Russian accents, and instead of breaking the story, they make you feel like a cultural eavesdropper. It's bad, but it all adds to the alien atmosphere of *Metro's* apocalypse.

Flashbacks are frequent, but the radioactive "Event" that drove Moscow residents into the subways is unexplained. What's important is the ongoing conflict. Nazis and communists battle, their humanity

gone in similar ways. The powerless proles get their heads measured and are shot if the constantly-changing guidelines dictate that today, they're mutants.

And there's you, Artyom. The returning mute hero, in a game that's shifted away from ammo management and bolstered its stealth options. In the first game, stealth was an unpromoted, but occasionally viable option – however, in *Last Light*, the code on your watch has been greatly simplified. Gone is the traffic light warning system – this time, if the blue light is on, you're invisible. You can carve a secret path through most rooms by extinguishing lights with a silenced gun, or by hand. It's no *Splinter Cell*, but getting the chance to avoid the tough battles is appreciated.

Did you know?

GLUCOSE KEY

At one point, you'll find a poster advert for Dmitriy Gluchowski's next book, *Metro 2035*. This will follow the story of *Last Light*, but it'll also have richer dialogue, and longer passages describing the mushroom soup, probably.

THE KNOWLEDGE

What is it?

FPS set in Russian wastelands and Moscow tunnels.

What's it like?

Shooting, chatting, stealth, atmosphere, rails. It's a ride.

Who's it for?

Fans of the first game - it's more of the competent same.



He's a Red. Imagine how the Nazis look.

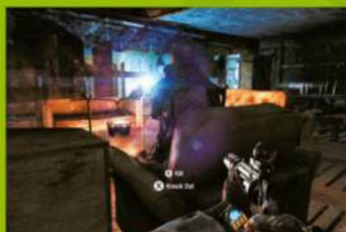
Metro: Last Light

"Light can be your ally or your enemy"



GOOD LIGHT, BAD LIGHT

Light is the enemy when it comes to human opponents – leave your torch on, and enemies will spot you a mile off. With other monsters, light turns into an *Alan Wake*-like ally. Conditioned to live in darkness, your torch makes some armoured beasts retreat into a prone position – train it on them for long enough, and they'll flip over and die, without a bullet wasted. For other monsters, light or dark makes no odds – when you're faced with a group of Werewolf-esque Watchers, you're best to revert to classic FPS mode: retreat in a circle, while firing your gun.



A friendship? Drama demands death or betrayal.



We sent this to the videogame loos Tumblr.

XBOX LIVE

There's no multiplayer, no co-op, no leaderboards, and no challenges. Still, you've got those Achievements, including a ten-pointer for sitting through a can-can dance.

Artyom's slightly over-effective stealth is hobbled a bit by the fact that you can't smuggle unconscious bodies into a safe space – and once alerted, either by a substantial direct sighting or the body of a friend, guards remain on permanent alert. Although the game is ridiculous in many ways, at least you won't hear guards say: "Hmm, I guess my friend was killed by my imagination," and resume staring blankly at the wall in a convenient-to-throttle position. If they do find you, the alarm is raised, which opens up doors to allow the armoured guys into the fight.

Walk the line

Metro is a highly linear shooter, and owes a lot of its design finesse to *Half-Life 2*. But it offers you areas that are as optional as they can be fruitless. One ignorable area was cocooned in webbing, and felt like a dead cert for a collectible. We found nothing and, perversely, that felt good. A whole area, designed to punish the curious? So long as we weren't missing something obvious, that's brilliantly cruel.

The "currency is ammo" system works as a fiction, but buying ammo with ammo never really rang true. With firing-ammo less sparse, you're free to spend cash-ammo on scopes and barrels for your guns.

The final tension comes from your gas mask. Limited by eroding filters, it's an inverted "underwater" mechanic, and about as much fun as drowning in *Sonic*. But it serves other, more atmospheric purposes – increasing the claustrophobia by getting spattered with blood, and hearing your rasping breath echo around as the filter degrades.

Last Light is a big dose of more *Metro*. It has the same mid-2000s flavour, and pulls it off again by offering a varied set of locations and missions. It has no aspirations above being a linear FPS, and if you're okay with that, it's a real treat. If you find your arse being handed to you, though – consider sticking to the darkness.

XBOX 360 VERDICT

- ✓ Old-school linear FPS done well
- ✓ Stealth routes more obvious
- ✓ Improves 2033's systems
- ✗ Dynamite-fisted exposition
- ✗ Ropy translation

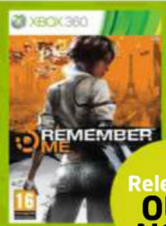
THE SCORE
Get the translation done by a native speaker

8



Visible ammo clips keeps the UI clean and sparse.

Details



Released
OUT NOW

Publisher Capcom
Developer Dontnod
Entertainment
Price £39.99
Players 1
Co-op None

Did you know?

MEMO BOOK

How did *Remember Me* get such a monopoly on humanity's memories? Simple - it let them upload and share them, online. As damaging as a rogue Facebook could be, we'd be the first to upload everything if the tech ever arrives.

Remember Me

You've got to S-Pressen yourself

Reviewer



Jon Blyth
OXM Log

If you tore apart *Remember Me* and scored every aspect of it individually, it'd get every score there is. The world design is magnificent - it's like the slums that we never saw in *Mirror's Edge*. Whatever the tech is that allows the transference and commodification of memories, it also adds a clean layer of augmented info onto your vision.

And you've got to give props to a developer that invested so much in its tech-infested Parisian slum-world, that it created a modern mythological language around it. Take Pressens: abilities that you slot into your limited, predefined combos. You can build bespoke combos out of these that boost damage, heal Nilin, and boost your special attacks. A dodge button does something to add action and

variety, although the touted ability to resume your combo is too easily lost to a shift of Nilin's target focus.

Special Powers, or S-Pressens, let you explode, possess, or stun enemies, and let you survive otherwise overwhelming battles. One of these abilities is

called Sensen DOS. So "use your Sensen DOS S-Pressen" is a legitimate sentence in this world. Kudos, Dontnod.

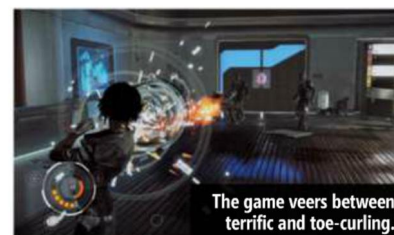
You've given sibilant gibberish a respectable sci-fi sheen.

While the combat system deserves credit for being novel, it's a little claustrophobic, with a tight camera leading to interrupting attacks coming from out of shot. The *Tomb Raider* platforming is a little heavy-footed, too, especially compared to the unhinged combat. Paths are marked far too obviously by the Sensen overlay. It's simply a matter of following the yellow

arrows, which leaves you feeling like you're being taken for a walk without ever being let off the lead. The odd optional bonus area doesn't really break that spell. It's a shame. With a fantastic world,



At least your ears aren't the only things that bleed.



The game veers between terrific and toe-curling.

an excellent premise, decent combat, indifferent platforming and a protagonist who'll commit what seem like atrocities without ever really questioning her taskmaster, it's impossible to give this game a score that reflects the fantastic, flawed, enjoyable, amazing - and occasionally crap - whole. If nothing else, buy *Remember Me* because it's a patchwork quilt of ideas both derivative and original. Just have your most forgiving ears installed, because *Remember Me* makes an impressive effort to dominate any future "top 10 stupidest lines of dialogue" list feature.

XBOX LIVE

There's nothing here for social types. Even the Achievements don't start rolling in until the last chapter.

THE KNOWLEDGE

What is it?

Tomb Raider plus *Batman* plus *Mirror's Edge*. In neo-Paris.

What's it like?

From perfection to atrocious, settling on "very good".

Who's it for?

People who like their clichés peppered with new ideas.

XBOX 360 VERDICT

- Beautifully realised world
- Fresh ideas mixed with old
- Wonderful nonsense
- Combat gets claustrophobic
- Ye gods, the dialogue

THE SCORE
Great concept, pulled off with style and flaws

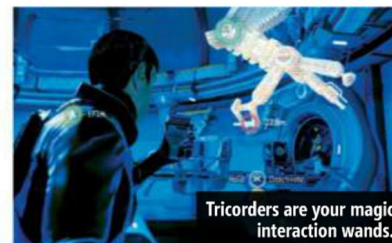
7

Details



Released
OUT NOW

Publisher Namco Bandai
Developer Digital Extremes
Price £39.99
Players 1-2
Co-op 2 players



Star Trek

An ignoble enterprise from the creators of *The Darkness 2*

Reviewer



Edwin Evans-Thirlwell
OXMETBoy

Space. The final frontier, or at least the one with the most expensive special effects. These are the voyages of the Starship Enterprise... F? G? We forget which letter it's up to now. Its sadly continuing mission? To explore strange new worlds that are actually giant, broken hamster-runs, packed with strangely magnetic boulders to cower behind, terminals and locks to "hack" by way of vacuous mini-games, and yellow-tinted ledges to sob at hysterically as you die of magic ragdoll sickness on the rocks a whopping ten whole feet below.

To seek out spasmodic, brain-dead new life beset by clipping errors, and peck at it with miserable, degrading, heft-less weapons, or waddle around it like a ninja made of pillows and arthritis, or scrape generally inessential XP from it

using retro iPhones, or ignore it completely and make a despairing break for the waypoint only to get stuck on one of those magnetic boulders and expire. To boldly go where literally everybody in the entire action games industry has gone before, and do its absolute, smiling best to ensure that nobody ever wants to go there ever, ever again.

Did you know?

SEEING STARS

Star Trek reboot director JJ. Abrams has expressed an interest in developing videogames. Now there's a man who's in a position to change the course of the industry. Let's hope this game isn't representative of his future efforts.

Shields down

Rushed out to capitalise on the *Into Darkness* film's publicity drive, the new *Star Trek* game is a generic, shoddy cover shooter that all but tries to annoy you. Like a jaded clown caught in a bankrupt routine, it bumbles and staggers theatrically from one utter failure of imagination and execution to another – broken swimming sections, boring stealth, wobbly on-rails jetpack sequences, and hammer-X-for-salvation QTEs.

The so-so script makes no bones of all this – indeed, it frequently revels in the game's hand-me-down impotence. "You mean we have to hack three terminals to open the door again?" whines Kirk, as Spock hauls him up from the peculiarly rigid sitting position that is *Star Trek's* equivalent of Down But Not Out. "I fear it may be so, Captain," comments our Vulcan

friend, as yet more Gorn reinforcements sizzle out of the ether.

The unkindest cut of all is that you only rarely get to actually command the Enterprise, and when you do, the implementation would disgrace the average *Call of Duty* turret sequence. Digital Extremes has, at least, managed to port over the look and feel of the JJ. Abrams films – watching your ship tear apart space bandits with warbling photon torpedoes is a gentle thrill. But these points of stylistic overlap only serve to emphasise the key takeaway here, which is that the relationship between film and videogames is still largely one of mercenary opportunism. Let's hope Abrams' high-profile partnership with *Half-Life* creator Valve takes us in a different direction.

XBOX LIVE

There's two player co-op, but it's a chore – the game resets progress to the start of the chapter when one player drops out. Competitive multiplayer is thankfully absent.

THE KNOWLEDGE

What is it?
Cover shooter with jumpy bits and puzzles.

What's it like?
As painful as seeing Bill Shatner play Hamlet, probably.

Who's it for?
Incurable Trekkies, children and the taste-deficient.

XBOX 360 VERDICT

- Resembles the film
- Boring cover combat
- Wearisome hacking puzzles
- Tepid level concepts
- Technically shoddy

THE SCORE
It's time to set phasers to kill

3

Released
OUT
NOW

Publisher Capcom
Developer Capcom
Price £39.99
Players 1-2
Co-op 2 players

Resident Evil: Revelations HD

Is it the binnacle of its genre, or all washed-up?



Reviewer



Alex Dale

Gears of War creator Cliff Bleszinski reckons big-budget survival horror games are dead in the water; that there's no money in the genre unless you sex it up with guns and explosions. Disagree? Here's your chance to prove him wrong.

Unlike recent action-heavy entries in the *Resident Evil* series, *Revelations* is pure old-school horror; an eerie, methodical trawl into the depths of a creaking cruise liner, where a faint SOS beacon lures Jill Valentine, Chris Redfield and friends into a compelling spiral of deceit and dismay.

Don't let the fact that this is an HD port of a Nintendo 3DS game throw you off; *Revelations* is an expansive and progressive action-thriller, which expertly weaves the atmosphere and pacing of the earlier *Resident Evils* with the fraught over-the-

shoulder gunplay that defines the series in the modern era.

In fact, *Revelations* owes its success to its humble origins. Since the 3DS didn't have the guts to throw monsters at you like they're going out of fashion, the original developers had to make every last one count. Even the lowliest mutants soak up more bullets than you can afford to spare – survival depends on your ability to keep a steady aim under pressure, disarming your foes by literally disarming them with a few well-placed shots and moving in close for a melee kill.

That's easier said than done however, as the claustrophobic level design always leaves you with less manoeuvring space than you'd like.

Since the original was designed with 3DS's Circle Pad Pro control pad attachment in mind, the controls translate well to the Xbox pad. If anything, we'd say

they translate a little *too* well. Part of *Resi*'s charm has always been in rubbing up against the limitations of the controls. The 'tank style' movement of the characters remains the same, making those narrow corridors that much narrower, but

swapping between weapons is now as simple as tapping the D-pad, so there are no longer any frantic mid-fight fumbles.

This means *Revelations* loses some of its challenge in its move to the big screen, something Capcom has attempted to fix with the new 'Infernal' remix mode. Unfortunately it's cement-mixer hard, and almost impossible with the basic weapons. We'd have preferred a halfway house between the two. That notwithstanding, this is a superb port of what may be the best survival-horror game on Xbox since *Dead Space* first lurched onto the scene.

Did you know?

LIFE AFTER DEATH

Rachel Foley, the agent you see being bludgeoned to death in the opening act, is a new addition to *Raid Mode*'s playable characters. Early concept art suggests she was once earmarked to be playable in the campaign.



They move slowly, but they never stop coming.



Putting classic survival horror back on the map.

XBOX LIVE

The main campaign doesn't support co-op – realistically the levels would have to be re-designed from scratch for that to work – but *Raid*, an arcade-stylised score attack mode, does. So there.

THE KNOWLEDGE

What is it?

Formerly 3DS exclusive hair-raiser given a HD face-lift.

What's it like?

A lethal mix of blind turns and freaks with buzzsaw-fingers.

Who's it for?

Horror fans who feel *Dead Space* has lost its way.

XBOX 360 VERDICT

- More atmosphere than a sketchy pub
- Superb fusion of *Resi*'s old and new
- Episodic structure works well on Xbox
- Creaky setting is an instant classic
- HD visuals belie its 3DS roots

THE SCORE
After a few iffy *Resis*, this is a Revelation

9

Details

Released
OUT
NOW

Publisher Codemasters
Developer Codemasters
Price £39.99
Players 1-12
Co-op None

Grid 2

Naught to sexy



Reviewer



Sam White

XBOX
LIVE

The online options in *Grid 2* are extensive and offer great variety. There's even a modified flashback option for when you end up face-planting your ride into a wall, which will happen a fair bit if you've got a full lobby of 12.

There's no cockpit cam in *Grid 2*. So if you turn your petrol-head nose up at unrealistic camera perspectives, *Grid 2* will make you feel like the very Tin Lizzie plebeians you mock, sitting on your throne of scrapped exhausts. But that shouldn't put you off.

While the lack of a cockpit view is a shame, *Grid 2* is still exhilarating across its huge variety of competitive disciplines. It's similar to the original, and those already invested in the series will quickly realise *Grid 2* plays it safe, but the content quality is high despite the reserved delivery.

The campaign structure is bog standard. You start with nothing – no fans, cash or cars – and gradually work your way through the World Series Racing table, earning new rides and budding followers that boost your standings. It's a tried and tested structure, and the game is impressively sizeable, but the main events are punctuated with awkward real-life

mocked-up ESPN interviews. Computers display Q&A sessions with your driver, and there's other stuff that forces the LOLs of today's technological world in your face. It's all stilted and completely unnecessary. We just want to drive fast cars, mate.

Rise to the top (again)

The event structure is tightly knit at first, filtering you through a limited number of events to amass cars and progress to the more substantial tiers, but there's enough diversity in the actual racing. Standard races in the bustle of US and Europe are accompanied by exclusively Asian disciplines such as Drift, which focuses on slick sideways control rather than point-to-point apex accuracy. Unsurprisingly, every location looks gorgeous. Codies' games now thin the graphical jumps between new games thanks to the Xbox's processing ceiling, but *Grid 2* still looks remarkable.

It's important to pick the right class of car to maximise your performance. A grip car for a drift event won't get any rubber burning, while a drift ride for a blazing street chase through Miami will leave you spinning; every ride has its nuances. The handling is spot-on across the board, and it balances fun, speed and precision better than any other arcade racer.



Rack up big points by driving like a loon.

The new Live Routes mode removes the mini-map, randomly generating courses as you race. Not being able to anticipate turns ramps up the challenge, as does balancing your racing ruthlessness with more generous use of the brake pedal. Thankfully, these events aren't overused to the point where they become a gimmick. Everything extends online, making multiplayer one of the best around. The fact the single player is lifted wholesale gives it longevity. Most importantly, it's pure fun.

That *Grid 2* remains so enjoyable despite its reserved approach is to the credit of its formula. It's slick and sexy, but without any revolutionary new features that elevate it above what the series did before.

Did you
know?

GETTING PERSPECTIVE

Grid 2 may be missing the in-car cam, but as executive producer Clive Moody points out, only a slim 5% of gamers even use it in Codemasters' racers. That slim 5% is very passionate about having a cockpit cam, however.



Try not to get distracted by the gorgeous vistas.

THE KNOWLEDGE

What is it?

Codemasters' on-road alternative to its *DIRT* series.

What's it like?

The original *Grid*, but bigger and without a cockpit cam.

Who's it for?

The 95% who don't use a cockpit cam in racing games.



Get a move on or those cheers will turn to jeers.

XBOX 360 VERDICT

- ☒ Exhilarating racing
- ☒ Hugely varied
- ☒ Excellent multiplayer
- ☐ Plays it safe
- ☐ No cockpit cam

THE SCORE
An accomplished and
flashy racer, but safe

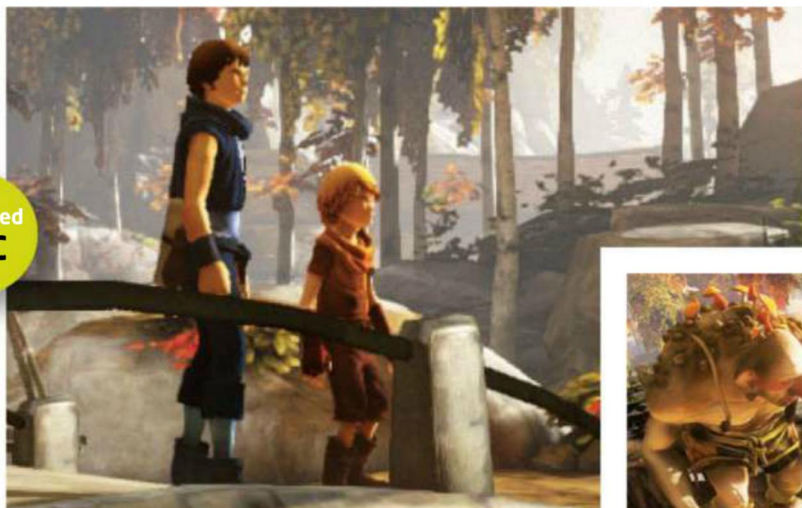
8

Details



Released
TBC

Publisher 505 Games
Developer Starbreeze Studios
Price 1,200MP (£9.75)
Players 1
Co-op None



Both brothers have their own unique interactions.



The brothers soon learn that looks are deceiving.

XBOX 360
THE OFFICIAL XBOX MAGAZINE
MUST BUY!

Brothers: A Tale of Two Sons

This ain't heavy, this is Brothers

Reviewer



Aoife Wilson
OXM Aoife

When faced with losing someone you love, it can be difficult to accept that the world will keep turning, even after they're gone. In a new Xbox Live Arcade game by Starbreeze Studios, two nameless brothers embark on an epic journey to retrieve a rare ingredient that may cure their ailing father.

Though you witness a strange and magical land unfolding all around them, and see first-hand how infinitesimal these boys are in the grand scheme of things, your focus never slips away from their painful, personal journey. From humble beginnings in their idyllic seaside village, their travels

take them to some wondrous locations, including a giant's battleground where the rivers literally run red, a quiet and remote castle in the sky, and a frozen, faraway village hiding a dangerous secret. Although some areas bear a remarkable resemblance to classic PlayStation 2 title *Ico*, and the darker facets of its emotive tone echo XBLA's *Limbo*, it's the shared bond between the two siblings that makes this a very unique experience.

Family ties

It's a bond that is strengthened through the game's controls, which has each brother's movements mapped to their own individual thumb stick, and their interactions to each trigger button; left stick and trigger for the older sibling, and right for the younger. Though mastering their simultaneous actions can take some practice, it opens up to some interesting opportunities later in the game, where the brothers take one another's lives in their hands and the visual treat of perfect

platforming synchronicity is its own reward. They share magical moments, from piloting a hang glider and riding on mountain goats to teaming up to take down larger opponents, and in those rare and heartbreaking moments when the pair are separated, you too feel their anxiety, loneliness and fear.

Their adventure is taken to some very dark places, and like the best fairy tales, the macabre is equally mixed with the magical. This is a world full of stories, all unfolding, interlocking and touching one another in different and profound ways. It's a bold creative vision, one that the simplistic art direction of the game cannot always match. But despite some slight technical let downs, and a few underwhelming aesthetics, *Brothers* is a rather beautiful tale of love and loss, of fables and fairy tales, and of family most of all.

Did you know?

SIDE STORIES

Each of *Brothers'* Achievements tells its own self-contained story, but it'll take a bit of exploration and experimentation to unlock them all. Help a caged bird find love, a lonely bunny find friends, and a grieving stranger find peace.

Sun-dappled meadows give way to darker areas.



Benches allow you to stop and savour the view.



THE KNOWLEDGE

What is it?

A short but bittersweet fairy tale adventure.

What's it like?

A platformer/puzzler where you play co-op with yourself.

Who's it for?

Those who like a strong story, simply told.

XBOX 360 VERDICT

- ✓ Touching story
- ✓ Inventive controls
- ✓ Glimpse into a fascinating world
- ✗ Visuals fail to match creative vision
- ✗ Camera can be unintuitive

THE SCORE
Bring some tissues for the game's final act

9

»Details

God Mode

Deity of the dead

Get a full team of four fully participating members, and *God Mode* is an unadulterated blast. It's a co-op shooter from the oldest of schools – before bullets came burdened with philosophy. Narrated by a wildly camp Spirit Guide, you must survive a

chain of arenas. Each run is made different by impressive randomised twists. Some are negative – ammo drains away, monsters are bigger. Some are positive – XP and health boosts.

You can toughen things up with Oaths, which award you bonus XP and Gold, at the

expense of ammo, health, armour and so on. The oaths are individual, so you're not committing the team to a tough ride – but if you use up the spare lives, you may get a strongly worded message after the round.

Instantly replayable, and with a good balance of co-operation and friendly resentment, *God Mode* is legitimate and straightforward old-school fun.



Publisher Atlus
Developer Saber Interactive
Price 800MP (£6.50)
Players 1-4
Co-op 1-4 players

Released
OUT
NOW

Ever get the impression someone hates you?



One down, a zillion more to go. Get in.



»Details

Poker Night 2

Chips with the chaps

Computerised poker is generally a terrible idea. Guessing at an AI is no substitute for deciding if the tic in your mate's eye is tempered excitement, or a dread-filled bluff. Telltale's stroke of genius is to let you play against some of fiction's best characters. Sam & Max,

Brock from *The Venture Bros.*, Claptrap, and *The Evil Dead's* Ash are your opponents at the testosterone-soaked table, with the only females, Moxxi and GLaDOS, in supporting roles.

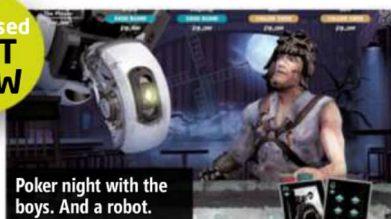
Two kinds of poker are on offer: Texas Hold 'Em and Omaha. The difference

between the two is the number of cards you hide from the other players. With Texas, it's two. Omaha players get four cards to build the community cards into a winning hand.

The games are pacy enough, and the characters shine. From Brock's bravado, to Claptrap's unpredictability, they're all beautifully reproduced.



Publisher Telltale Games
Developer Telltale Games
Price 800MP (£6.50)
Players 1
Co-op None

Released
OUT
NOW

Poker night with the boys. And a robot.



Behind the wide grins is a ruthless streak.



»Details

Doritos Crash Course 2

The free runner just got slightly less free

When a game is completely free, and faintly adorable, you can forgive it for being an advertising vehicle for a fattening snack food and not being the most polished platformer in the world. The sequel is the same moderately entertaining *Wipeout!* obstacle course, with one important

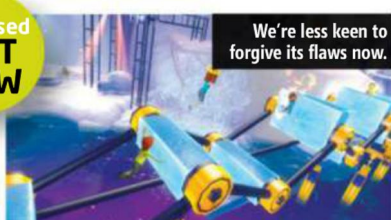
difference – it's still free to download. But now, Doritos has generously allowed you to spend money on it.

It's the dreaded free-to-play dual currency. Stars are earned by winning medals, discovering them on the course, and side challenges. They can be spent on unlocking new levels, and alternate paths

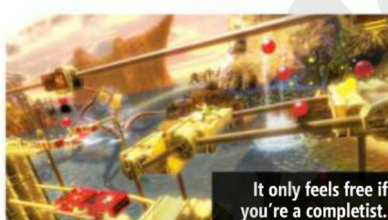
on which you'll find more stars. To afford the third and fourth worlds, you must be thorough. But don't worry – if you turn real money into Microsoft Points, you can swap one fictional currency for "coins", and use that currency as a replacement for stars. Put a few more fictitious currencies between level unlocks and the money we earn in our daily lives, and maybe it wouldn't feel like spending money at all, eh?



Publisher Microsoft
Developer Behaviour Interactive
Price Free
Players 1-4
Co-op None

Released
OUT
NOW

We're less keen to forgive its flaws now.



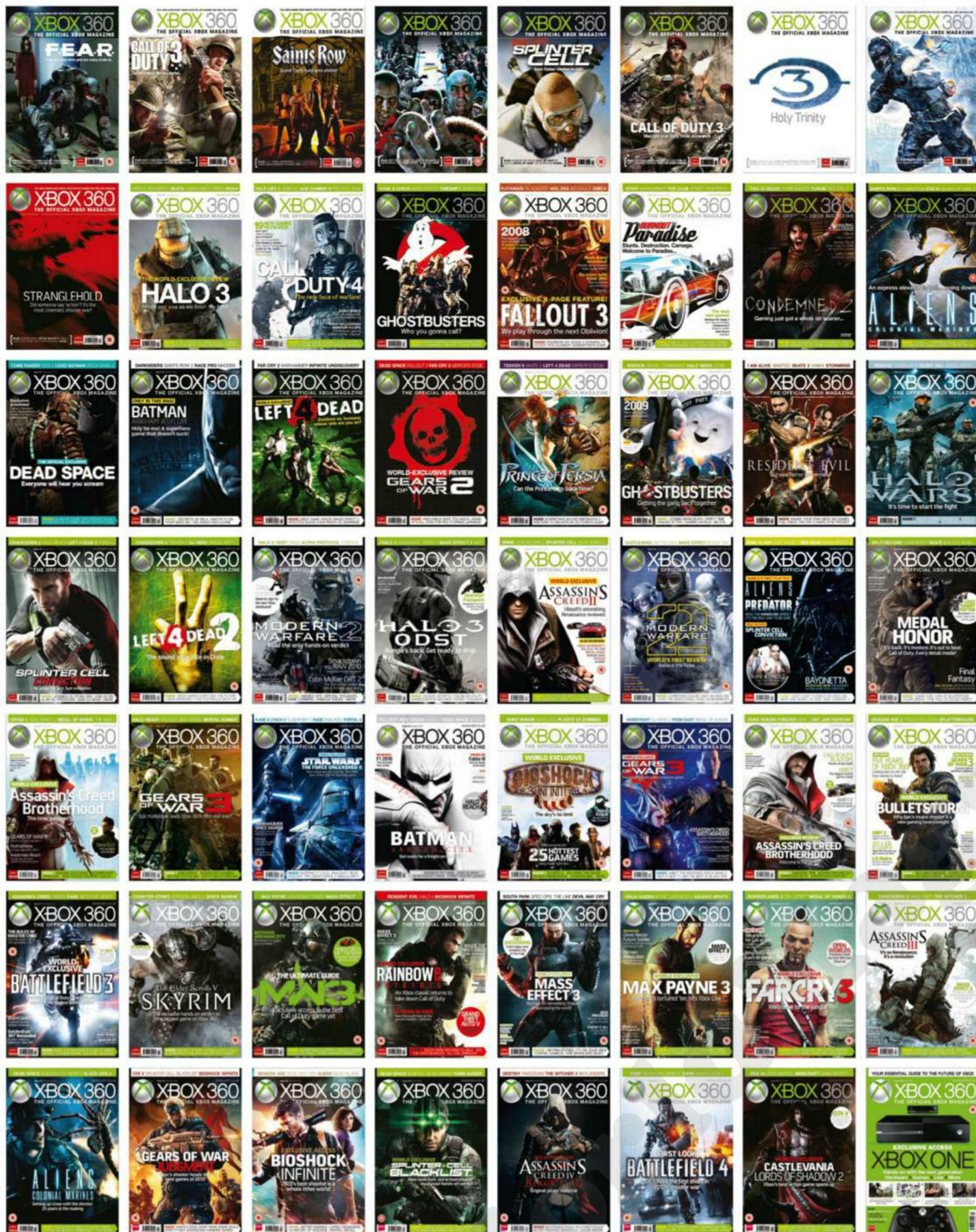
It only feels free if you're a completist.



GET MORE! Read reviews of many more games on your cover disc



Fittingly, Xbox One arrives exactly 100 issues after OXM welcomed the Xbox 360. Since then we've seen eight E3s, three Saints Rows, several million Gamerscore and one supercar road trip. We've rounded up the highs and lows of OXM and the games industry – picking out the console's most important creatives and least important games. Enjoy



THE 100 Club

Words:
Jon Blyth & Jon Hicks

We take a look back at our favourite moments from the past 100 issues of OXM



ISSUE 01
SEPTEMBER
2005

IT BEGINS!

The only issue, until now, that hasn't had a game character on its cover. Thanks for announcing Xbox One on our birthday, MS!



ISSUE 02
NOVEMBER
2005

ALL THAT JAZZ

We're used to interviews with lead artists, producers and (shudder) brand managers, but it's not often we get to chat to someone as legendary as DJ and producer Jazzy Jeff. The only other time we've been this starstruck was getting our photo taken with Ray Parker Jr at a *Ghostbusters* event.



ISSUE 03
DECEMBER
2005

GRAEME BOYD

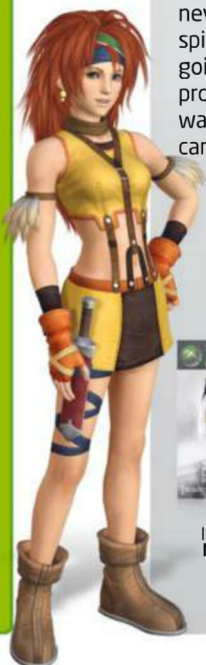


ISSUES Launch to Issue 10
THEN Online Editor

NOW Social Marketing Manager,
Xbox EMEA

FAVOURITE MEMORY?

One of the best things about being at OXM was working with true Xbox fans, so moving on to become social marketing manager for Xbox in Europe means that I've never had to give that up. My best but woolliest memory was reporting on the US 'Zero Hour' launch of Xbox 360. It involved spending 72 hours in a hanger in the Mojave Desert with 2,000 sleep-deprived Xbox fans. Went a bit *Heart of Darkness* by the end, but it was certainly more interesting than the usual midnight launch. That or beating [former online editor] Chris Warr's high score in *Geometry Wars*.



FLIGHT OF FANTASY

Xbox 360's first MMO was on our cover and on our coverdisc. *Final Fantasy XI* never seemed to set the world ablaze, but it's quietly become a real money-spinner for Square Enix. Producer Akihiko Matsui worried that the game was never going to be finished: "The biggest pinch came when the outline of the overall project was finalised, and it became clear that the estimates of how much work was needed for each section of the game were absolutely massive. This estimate came about seven to eight months after the team was formed. We dealt with the workload by splitting the volume of content into two, putting the first half into the core game and releasing the other in the *Zilart* expansion a year later."



ISSUE 05
MARCH
2006



ISSUE 06
APRIL
2006

SCROLL PLAY

If you play an *Elder Scrolls* game, you have to accept that, with such a flexible world, things are going to go wrong. Bethesda's Gavin Carter, who worked on *Morrowind* and *Oblivion* before going on to *Fallout 3*, spoke about their AI troubles: "There's nothing I'd call easy about next-gen development, but the thing that gave us the most unexpected trouble was our AI system. The AI controls all the actions of characters and creatures, it's a system that touches just about every facet of gameplay. Small bugs in the system could percolate through the entire content base and cause critical gameplay sections to break."



ISSUE 04
JANUARY
2006

GARY CUTLACK



ISSUES Launch to 23
THEN Features Editor
NOW Mobile phone and technology freelancer

FAVOURITE MEMORY?

I started at around issue minus seven, due to Future closing the mag I was on well before Xbox 360 launched and putting me in a room on my own to "have ideas" for OXM. This involved thinking about whether games are best scored out of five, ten or 100. I'd do that for ten minutes in the morning, then spend the rest of the day looking at videos of naked people in increasingly extreme scenarios as my mental state deteriorated. The IT staff should have access logs to corroborate this. If you'd prefer a game anecdote, I enjoyed playing *Geometry Wars RE*, even at home when I didn't have to.



ISSUE 25
OCTOBER
2007

WOO HOO

We've had a couple of guest-edited issues. Clap-Trap was our most recent one, but back when *Stranglehold* was a thing, we convinced John Woo to do the job. Woo made way fewer jokes about leaking.



INFINITE POSSIBILITIES

Our cover review dished out an extremely rare 10/10 to then-Xbox 360 exclusive *BioShock*. The game had shed many features since it was originally pitched as the tale of Carlos Cuello, tasked with rescuing an heiress from a religious cult on an island. Add the word "floating", and that's *Infinite*. Other aspects of the game, like "an incredibly deep weapons system unlike anything the shooter genre has ever seen before", eventually manifested as "ammo types", a feature that was dropped from *Infinite* altogether. But for all the things we lost, we gained Rapture – one of the most hauntingly well-realised locations around – and also those melancholic murdersuits, the Big Daddies, leaving us with a superlative and intelligent shooter.



ISSUE 24
SEPTEMBER
2007



ISSUE 17
FEBRUARY
2007



ISSUE 18
MARCH
2007



ISSUE 19
APRIL
2007



ISSUE 20
MAY
2007

THE WINNER IS...

The inaugural OXM Awards took place – the only awards ceremony that understood no one wants to watch others win awards. The solution: cram the awards into a five-minute video, before starting the party. This debauchery went on for a couple of years.



ISSUE 21
JUNE
2007



ISSUE 22
JULY
2007



ISSUE 23
AUGUST
2007



ISSUE 16
JANUARY
2007



ISSUE 15
CHRISTMAS
2006



ISSUE 14
DECEMBER
2006



ISSUE 13
NOVEMBER
2006



ISSUE 12
OCTOBER
2006



ISSUE 11
SEPTEMBER
2006

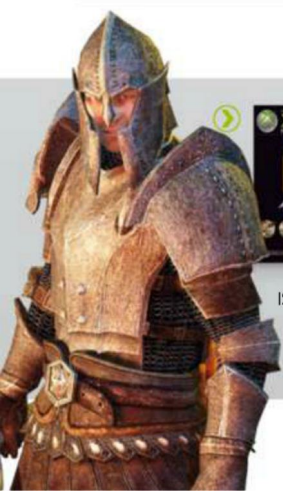
BEN TALBOT



ISSUES About 110 on the original Official Xbox Magazine, and launch to 60 on Xbox 360
THEN Community Editor
NOW Digital Marketing and Community Manager, Ubisoft UK

FAVOURITE MEMORY?

My favourite memory was playing *Guitar Hero II* on stage at Download Festival in front of about 7,000 really furious metal fans. I got properly pelted with bottles and cans, but it was one of the most insanely exhilarating experiences ever. Not sure what was in those cans though, didn't seem very hygienic.



ISSUE 07
MAY
2006



ISSUE 08
JUNE
2006



ISSUE 09
JULY
2006



ISSUE 10
AUGUST
2006

"Playing *Guitar Hero* in front of 7,000 metal fans was exhilarating"

LESSONS LEARNED

What did Infinity Ward wish it'd done differently with *Modern Warfare*? According to an interview in Game Developer magazine, a preoccupation with "adapting" movies and well-known battles led to one-sided battles and way too much desert. The fact that the game was mostly desert lingered for longer than it should have done, because a large part of the design team were involved on a second project that was letting them "flex their creative muscle". That project was abandoned in 2006, and all hands went on to *Modern Warfare*.

WHO MADE COD MODERN?

Infinity Ward's in-house staff in 2008



ISSUE 26
NOVEMBER
2007



ISSUE 27
DECEMBER
2007



ISSUE 31
MARCH
2008



ISSUE 30
FEBRUARY
2008

SONG AND DANCE

Since *Rock Band* launched in 2007, Harmonix never missed a single week in its constant stream of DLC songs – delivering well over 4,000 tracks. When it finally stopped this year, Harmonix gave some insight into what a challenging process that was. Music licensing isn't easy, it turns out, as rights to songs are usually held by multiple parties – often with their own managers – who in plenty of cases haven't been on speaking terms since the '80s. All you need is one party to hold out and the song won't turn up in *Rock Band*. And even when you can get every publisher and band member to agree, Harmonix needs access to original master recordings. Without them the studio can't split the tracks into individual pieces for each instrument – the very core of the game.



ISSUE 29
JANUARY
2008



ISSUE 28
CHRISTMAS
2007

ALIEN ENCOUNTER

Yes, we first glimpsed this game all the way back in 2008, seeing code that Gearbox boss Randy Pitchford later described as "a pre-pre-production effort, that wasn't even an alpha." OXM staffer Ben got to ride on Randy's Segway, though, so it wasn't an entirely wasted trip.



ISSUE 33
MAY
2008

PERFECT TEN

The world's first *GTA IV* review was written by Jonty following three days in a pitch-black room with a giant TV. The game got 10/10; Jonty got a death-like pallor and a nervous tic that endured for a month.

RENATO SORMANI



ISSUES 30 to 43
THEN Production Editor
NOW Restaurateur

FAVOURITE MEMORY?

I found myself having to do the inaugural OXM fitness feature shoot completely by myself, because everyone else on the team had conveniently 'forgotten' to bring their gym kits with them on the day. Now, I remember a time at school, when if you forgot your sports kit, you would end up having to take gym in your pants. So really, I consider that you guys got off lightly. I, on the other hand, ended up in about 40 images spread out across four pages of the magazine, with the main one being a photo of me holding a mocked up Xbox barbell, looking like I was seriously constipated. Fond memories.



FEEL THE FORCE

Before Haden Blackman left LucasArts in July 2010, he gave one last interview which revealed that *The Force Unleashed*, nearly killed the studio three years before its time. "We were building a game," said Blackman, "while building a team, while building a studio, while building an engine, while building a toolset. It was a huge undertaking. Just the fact that we got the game done at all was just a huge success for us. Would he do it again? "No. When we started, we didn't even have a dev kit. If an external developer showed three or four of the risks we took on, we'd have cancelled signing them on."



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SEPTEMBER
2008



ISSUE 36
AUGUST
2008



ISSUE 35
JULY
2008



ISSUE 34
JUNE
2008



ISSUE 38
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2008



ISSUE 39
NOVEMBER
2008



ISSUE 40
DECEMBER
2008





ISSUE 52
NOVEMBER
2009

RANDY THOUGHTS

In one of our most revealing interviews, Gearbox's Randy Pitchford divulged how many sales easy Gamerscore adds to a game (about 40,000) how to improve *Fallout 3* ("make it less boring"), and what it's like working with James Bond (which we were legally unable to reproduce in print).



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DECEMBER
2009



ISSUE 54
CHRISTMAS
2009



ISSUE 55
JANUARY
2010



ISSUE 56
FEBRUARY
2010



ISSUE 57
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2010



ISSUE 58
APRIL
2010



ISSUE 51
OCTOBER
2009



ISSUE 50
SEPTEMBER
2009



EXPERIENCE PROJECT NATAL

Microsoft wrote itself into E3 legend with this live theatre event, an occasion so baffling it makes *The Wicker Man* look like progressive healthcare. Jonty and our then-publisher found themselves on the floor of a convention centre wearing white plastic ponchos, rubbing outside shoulder pads with the likes of Molyneux and Itagaki, while Cirque du Soleil performers hit drums and cavorted in tribal attire, and a booming announcer claimed that "History is about to be rewritten". A family of three experienced Kinect by waving at boxes while suspended 60 feet above the crowd, a series of trailers were shown, and a dramatic musical number made everybody's shoulderpads start flashing different colours. Audience members were by turns bemused and terrified, nobody had the faintest idea what was happening, and many still don't.

RYAN KING



ISSUES 24 to 68
THEN Online Editor
NOW On Bournemouth beach, mourning my best years lost to practicing *Street Fighter* combos

FAVOURITE MEMORY?

I have so many, most of which involve the public humiliation of having to review singing or dancing games in an open-plan office (Monobrow's *Castlevania* stomp still gives me nightmares). But it's got to be the long-running PSW (R.I.P.) vs OXM battle, an epic trolling saga that tilted OXM's way when PSW went to print with its infamous 'KARTOS IS BACK' headline splashed across two pages. I still say Kartos by mistake to this day.



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2009



ISSUE 49
AUGUST
2009

SPLINTER GROUP

"It's definitely coming out this year," read the first line of our feature, which went to print a week before Ubisoft decided Sam's long-delayed reboot was being delayed again. Ubi Montreal was handed a half-finished reboot that needed a lot of work, with many fan features lost in the process. "Sam did not have a two-handed weapon," recalls creative director Maxime Béland. "Dragging dead bodies wasn't there any more. People ask, why did you cut dragging dead bodies from *Conviction* - I didn't cut it, it wasn't there when I arrived!"



MYTH BUSTING

We collected experts to answer the big questions of gaming, including: "Can you smash a crate with a crowbar?" (No.) "Can you snap somebody's neck in one movement?" (Yes, but it's best avoided.) "Do soldiers pick up guns from fallen enemies?" (They're quite attached to their own weapons, actually.) And "Do zombies really exist?" (Alarmingly, yes, but in a much less scary way than games present.)



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JUNE
2009



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2009



ISSUE 45
APRIL
2009

MARIA WHO?

In our favourite PR failure, Jonty visited Epic for the announcement of *Gears 2*, and went for lunch with the voice actors. When asked what they'd been working on, he was told "oh, we just recorded Maria's death scene." We elected not to include the game's major plot twist in our reveal feature.



ISSUE 41
CHRISTMAS
2008



ISSUE 42
JANUARY
2009

ROAD HOGS

We've ridden two Warthogs. One was built by *Halo* enthusiast, historian and film-maker Peter Cooper. That was a converted Land Rover - but the one we rode in Issue 42 was based around a Nissan Patrol 4x4, and was a prop for the cancelled *Halo* movie by Peter Jackson.



ISSUE 43
FEBRUARY
2009



ISSUE 44
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2009



ISSUE 59
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2010



ISSUE 60
JUNE
2010



ISSUE 61
JULY
2010

TRENCH WARFARE

Deus Ex 3's Jonathan Jacques-Belletête tells us about an internal wrangle that's been secret until now: "I didn't want Adam Jensen to have a trench coat! I was really trying to avoid repeating the cliché of the cyberpunk hero always wearing a long coat. So I got Jim Murray to design a short jacket. I thought it looked great, however JF Dugas (game director) wasn't convinced. So we both agreed to also design a long coat version and have the team take a vote. Of course, the trench coat came out the winner. With hindsight, I think the trench was the right way to go. But personally, I would totally wear the short version."



ISSUE 63
SEPTEMBER
2010



SLIM CHANCE

The last memorable E3 before current-gen fatigue kicked in. Every person in the Microsoft presentation walked away with a new Xbox Slim, which generated a lot of anger, both righteous and jealous, from people who weren't there.



ISSUE 62
AUGUST
2010



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OCTOBER
2010



ISSUE 65
NOVEMBER
2010



ISSUE 66
DECEMBER
2010

CHANGE OF GEAR

Rod Fergusson told us about making *Gears* more grown-up. "We strived to bring more story and more meaning to the *Gears* game – trying to be the videogame equivalent of *Jackass* gets tiresome after a while. I travelled to Mexico and Europe, and there's such a passion in the players. People care about the characters. They got upset when Dom died. They felt something in Paul's locker-room scene. It's light and shade, though – that contrast helps with the pacing. You can't always be at 11. Gore would get boring on its own, and so would the emotional moments. One validates the other."

GILLEN MCALISTER



ISSUES Launch to 67
THEN Staff Writer
NOW UK Editor in Chief, GameReactor

FAVOURITE MEMORY?

My favourite memory is one of the earliest: seeing *PGR3* for the first time. Until then all we'd seen of "the next gen" was a basic XBLA puzzler (*Hexic HD*) and *Tony Hawk's American Wasteland*. There was a worried silence in the office before salvation arrived in a bubble-wrapped package from Microsoft. We fired it up and sat agog at photo-realistic courses and sports cars that looked like they'd just rolled out of the showroom. For me, the next-gen truly arrived that day.



ISSUE 68
JANUARY
2011

KING OF RAP

Tinchy Stryder had the misfortune to come up against the raw power of our own Ryan King in a battle of *Def Jam Rapstar*. After suffering humiliation at the agile lips of the man-mountain, Strider went on a pilgrimage through the Nevada desert to find himself.



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2011



ISSUE 70
MARCH
2011



ISSUE 71
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2011

BITE THE BULLET

Bulletstorm looked great, played great, and sold poorly, becoming a sad lapping wave on Blockbuster beach.



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MAY
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JANUARY
2012



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2012



ISSUE 83
MARCH
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ISSUE 84
APRIL
2012



ISSUE 85
MAY
2012



RIDING HIGH

"After the success of *Trials HD*, people wondered what we could possibly do next to make the game better," recalls creative director Antti Ilvessuo. "Add more beef? Add a fifth, maybe even a sixth razor blade? I think we caught everyone off-guard with *Trials Evo* – introducing multiplayer, taking the world outdoors, bringing in Track Central, and creating the world's first game dev Avatar prop, the beloved ANBA toy!"



A DECADE OF XBOX

In Issue 80 we celebrated ten years of the glorious existence of Xbox – remembering moments from the original Xbox like the banned adverts, the Japanese cold shoulder, and the point when marketers decided they didn't like the name, and got told by a focus group that they were wrong. Stupid marketing guys.



ISSUE 80
CHRISTMAS
2011

CURSE OF PREY

In Issue 74, we got excited about the *Prey* sequel when we discovered that it wasn't just another linear shooter in a spaceship made out of farting body-parts. At the time, no one knew *Prey* was a cursed franchise, and every game in it would be doomed to development hell.



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AUGUST
2011



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2011



ISSUE 77
OCTOBER
2011



ISSUE 78
NOVEMBER
2011



ISSUE 79
DECEMBER
2011

SKYRIM

We started documenting the stories produced by *Skyrim*, pinning them onto an interactive map of the continent.

SAINTS NOT STEALTH

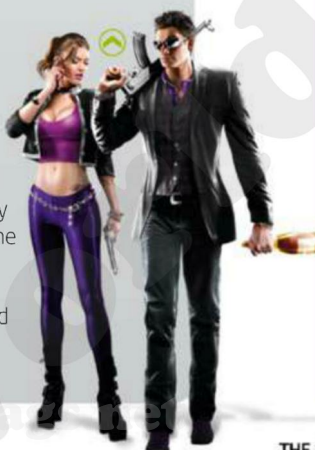
Saints Row is the game that's as subtle as an over-inflated sex doll, right? Everyone knows that. Well, everyone except Volition, maybe. Greg Donovan talked about one of the concepts that got unusually far in the process before getting thrown out. "An early high-level concept for *SRIII* was Subterfuge," explains Donovan. "Narratively, we had the player infiltrating the Stilwater police department, for reasons I can't remember. Mechanically, it was shaping up to be a stealth-like game. When we presented to THQ, there was a long silence, followed by some executives (rightfully) shooting it down and giving me an earful. They absolutely made the right call and I'm grateful we were sent back to the drawing board. Undercover stealth is not a *Saints* game."



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JULY
2011



ISSUE 73
JUNE
2011



MIKE CHANNELL



ISSUES 30 to 85
THEN Deputy Editor
NOW Video Producer at Outside Xbox

FAVOURITE MEMORY?

The thing I always enjoyed on OXM was trying to truly distil the experience of a game into words or video. My most memorable moment, though, was when I foolishly agreed to learn to mix songs on vinyl in the run up to *DJ Hero's* release and perform a 15 minute set at its launch party, tutored by the game's scratch expert DJ Blakey. It was a stressful, nerve racking couple of months, made worthwhile when the actual, real-life DJ Shadow said "sounded good to me". It's going to be tough to top that.





ISSUE 86
JUNE
2012

BANG ON

Codemasters heralded the arrival of *DiRT Showdown* with a real-life banger race, in which our resident petrolheads did battle. Jonty's clapped-out Cavalier triumphed over Mike's Toyota Camry, despite spinning out on the finish line. Although the real winners were the pro banger racers who kept the cars running, including a Transit van that ended the day two feet shorter than when it began.



ISSUE 87
JULY
2012



ISSUE 88
AUGUST
2012

DREDD CERT

We interviewed the criminally under-successful Alex Garland, covering *Enslaved* and *DmC*. Not to mention his brilliantly stylish *Judge Dredd* movie, which everyone should have watched, and virtually no-one did.



ISSUE 92
DECEMBER
2012



ISSUE 91
NOVEMBER
2012



ISSUE 90
OCTOBER
2012



GOLDEN SHOWER

We celebrated *Borderlands 2* with Claptrap as guest editor, as represented by Gearbox's Anthony Burch. We also offered big prizes for anyone who found one of ten golden covers – which understandably elevated the hopes of people who got one of the 20,000 orange covers. Sorry...



ISSUE 89
SEPTEMBER
2012



ISSUE 93
CHRISTMAS
2012

ROAD TRIP

In the sort of press event that just doesn't happen anymore, we joined a bunch of motoring journalists for a three-day supercar race from Paris to Top Gear Live. Over the course of the trip, one driver got a driving ban from French police, one backed a Bentley into a wall, and another caused the gearbox to drop out of a £168,000 Mercedes. Which is probably why this is the sort of press event that doesn't happen anymore.



ISSUE 94
JANUARY
2013

SAVE YOURSELF

Alice reviewed *Skyrim's* *Hearthfire* expansion using Edwin's save, a seemingly minor decision that proved traumatic for them both, and hilarious for everyone else. Alice couldn't survive using Ed's skill set, disliked his companion, and couldn't get sufficient cash to build anything. Ed was horrified to discover that she'd sold everything he possessed to acquire a dank house and miserable child, and the guards all wanted to kill him. "It's like starring in a low-budget medieval soap opera as the Abusive Husband," he wailed.

MATT LEES



ISSUES 70 to 95
THEN Staff Writer
NOW Video Producer at VideoGamer

EXTREME MEMORY

Reviewing *Dark Souls*. It was a process that was so punishing, gruelling and terrifying that everyone reviewing it formed a support group. Other than that, my favourite moments were probably found on the video section of the disc: raving as a pair of owls in a *National Geographic* video; running along a time tunnel wearing the mask of Roger Helmer, an obscure MEP. Also, Log made me watch an infamous internet shock involving multiple girls and a single cup while I tried to explain how good *The Walking Dead* was. That was the first time I'd seen it, and I never want to see it again.



DARK TIMES

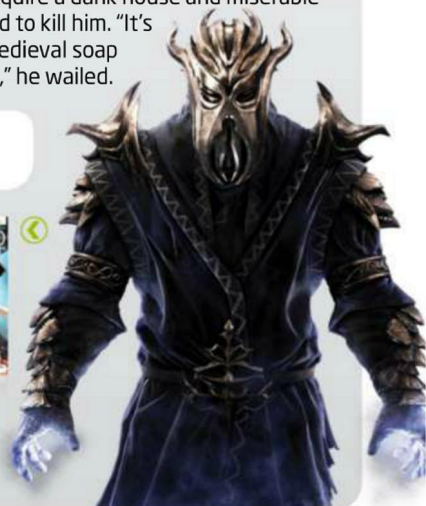
In Issue 96, the original reviewers of *Dark Souls* revealed the torment they'd suffered, as recorded in their email support group. This allowed us to print such gems as: "This sodding butterfly is doing my head in", and "there's nothing here for me except three golems and a seven-headed dragon".



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MARCH
2013



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FEBRUARY
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ISSUE 97
APRIL
2013



ISSUE 98
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ISSUE 99
JUNE
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ISSUE 100
JULY
2013

WIN!

100th issue extravaganza

Traditionally, we should be the ones receiving gifts, but since our 100th issue milestone is all thanks to you, we're giving away some prizes instead. We've joined forces with the likes of Activision, Bethesda, 2K Games, Insert Coin and Microsoft to create a one-off prize pack that includes goodies you won't find anywhere else.

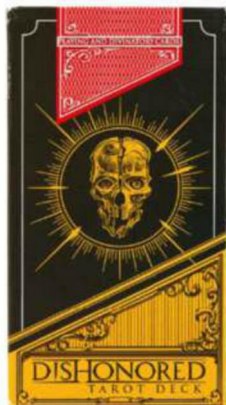
This mammoth prize pack features an Xbox 360 4GB Console Bundle; a *Destiny* porcelain coffee mug and key ring; a *BioShock Infinite* exclusive press kit styled after Booker's wooden 7th Cavalry, Wounded Knee box, with *Infinite* treasures inside; an *Injustice: Gods Among Us* press kit that includes the full game; a *Batman* T-shirt, three badges, a manual and a USB stick; a *Dishonored* Tarot Card Deck; a *Halo 3 Limited Edition* controller and figure; *Halo Wars Limited Edition*; *Halo 3 Limited Edition*; a *Fallout: New Vegas Collector's Edition*; a *Borderlands 2* Top Trumps Deck; a fab Insert Coin Toluca Lake hoodie; and a *Dishonored* T-shirt.

To be in with a chance of winning this exclusive, one-of-a-kind bundle, all you have to do is answer this question:

What month in 2005 did Issue 1 of the mag come out?

A: August B: September C: October

To enter, text OXM100 followed by a space, then either A, B or C to 87474. Competition closes 4 July. For more details or to enter online, visit oxm.co.uk/win.



COMPETITION TEXT ENTRY By entering a competition you are agreeing to receive details of future offers and promotions from Future Publishing Limited and related third parties. If you do not want to receive this information, please text the word STOP at the end of your message. Texts will be charged at £0.50 plus your standard network tariff rate. Free entry is available at oxm.co.uk/win. The winner will be drawn at random from all entries that answer correctly after the closing date printed. OXM's choice of prizes is final. The prize draw will take place at least two days after the closing date and the winner will be notified within 28 days of the draw. Only UK residents aged 16 and over may enter. No employees of Future Publishing Ltd or any company associated with this competition, or any member of their close family may enter. Prizes are as stated and no alternatives cash or otherwise are available. Future Publishing Ltd accepts no liability for any loss, damage or injury caused by any prizes won. Publicity may be given to any competition winner and/or entrants and their names and/or photographs printed in OXM. The Editor's decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into. Where prizes are offered on behalf of an associated company these prizes are provided in their entirety by these associated companies. Future Publishing Ltd cannot be held responsible for any failure to provide prizes as specified and all enquiries relating to such prizes will be referred to the associated companies. All entries must be received by the closing date. No purchase necessary. Copies of competition entry forms and winners list are available by written request from the Games Division Marketing Team, Future Publishing Ltd, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, BA1 2BW. Full terms and conditions can be viewed at www.futuretc.com

THE PRIZES DON'T STOP THERE! Yes, we'll also be giving things away on Twitter and Facebook all month, so keep checking back on our official pages to be in with a chance to win. Giveaway goodies will include a copy of the *Halo Encyclopedia*; an *Assassin's Creed II* art book; *Mortal Kombat*, *Metal Gear* and *Saints Row* T-shirts; a *Halo: Reach* wireless Xbox 360 headset; and cute fluffy dice from DICE for your car.



THE 100 most important people in games

Words: Alex Wiltshire

To mark our 100th issue, we run down the 100 people who'll shape gaming's future as we enter the next generation

Who are the most important people in the world of Xbox today? Five years ago it was the big execs who held all the power, but all that's starting to change. On one hand, we've seen the huge growth of a few games around which the industry revolves.

The people who make them are, in gaming terms, superstars. On the other, devs have far more opportunity to make games on their own terms than ever before. Today, the future of Xbox and all the biggest companies lies in devs' imaginations and know-how going towards making games we want to play.



100 ERIC CHAHI
GAME DESIGNER
One of game design's great dreamers, Eric Chahi is the creator of the technically groundbreaking *Another World*, originally released on the Amiga in 1991, and the virtually groundbreaking 2011 Xbox Live Arcade game *From Dust*. His care and imagination are unique.



99 TAMEEM ANTONIADES
CO-FOUNDER, NINJA THEORY
It takes balls to face what Tameem Antoniades has faced in revealing and releasing the reboot *DmC: Devil May Cry*, but his self-confidence is backed by the talent that can tell a good story through an action game.



98 TANYA JESSEN
PRODUCER, EPIC GAMES
From *Bulletstorm* to the upcoming *Fortnite*, Jessen has worked on Epic's most surprising, and fun, games of recent years. With many of her studio's key staff having recently left, expect to see a lot more of her.



97 CHRIS AVELLONE
DESIGNER, OBSIDIAN ENTERTAINMENT
For a while he looked lost in gaming's hinterlands with big, text-heavy RPGs like *Planescape: Torment* that publishers didn't think people wanted to play. Since then, he's been recruited to a \$4m-raising Kickstarter project, which just goes to show what those publishers know.



96 HILMAR VEIGAR PÉTURSSON
CEO, CCP
It's not for everyone, and certainly isn't for consoles, but *EVE Online*, the massively multiplayer sci-fi game that Pétursson's company has run for the last ten years still has much to inspire in games: its freedom and player-led dynamism.



95 JO TWIST
CEO, UKIE
The UKIE is the UK counterpart of US videogame trade body the Entertainment Software Association (ESA). It campaigns for and offers real support to devs, especially small ones. Approachable, enthusiastic and knowledgeable, Jo Twist is its fine leader.



94 MICHAEL D. GALLAGHER
PRESIDENT AND CEO, ENTERTAINMENT SOFTWARE ASSOCIATION
The ESA is the organiser of E3, which still holds the crown as the public event of the industry, while also encouraging US government in supporting videogames as a vital part of its economy.



93 JONATHAN BLOW
GAME DESIGNER
With *The Witness* on the way and XBLA title *Braid* under his belt, Jonathan Blow deserves the respect he gets from across the industry as a design theorist and fearless critic of the shady practices he feels undermine our relationships with games.



92 TETSUYA MIZUGUCHI
CEO, Q ENTERTAINMENT
Rez, *Sega Rally*, *Lumines*, *Space Channel 5*. That's a pretty good resume. We don't know what this statesman of the Japanese industry is working on next, but his love of mixing games and other popular culture is sure to make it special.



91 PHIL FISH
FOUNDER, POLYTRON CORPORATION
Don't listen to all the rubbish you hear about Polytron's Phil Fish. This talented designer might have a big mouth, but it's a result of his real love for videogames, and his delight at getting to make really good ones, like 2012's XBLA release *Fez*.



90 IAN LIVINGSTONE
LIFE PRESIDENT, EIDOS
From co-founding Games Workshop to leading Eidos, Livingstone is one of the industry's legends. He is now an important figure, fighting for government recognition of games' role in the economy and proper education.



89 CHRISTOPHER NOLAN
DIRECTOR

They say his films look like videogames, with *Inception* and *Memento* bending the rules of physics, and videogames have started to look a bit like his films: gritty and complex. Such creative interplays are very welcome.



88 NELS ANDERSON LEAD DESIGNER, KLEI ENTERTAINMENT

From out of the shadows, *Mark of the Ninja* emerged onto an unsuspecting XBLA and stunned players with its lithe take on 2D stealth. Its precise and clever design can be laid at Nels Anderson's feet.

83 ALEX RIGOPULOS CEO, HARMONIX MUSIC SYSTEMS

From *Guitar Hero* to *Dance Central*, Rigopulos has guided some of the most innovative and fun games in history. Now independent, the studio is working on a new project that history would suggest will be just as essential.

76 PETER MOLYNEUX FOUNDER, 22CANS

Having left *Fable*-maker Lionhead and set up a brand new studio that has so far focused on iOS, Peter Molyneux doesn't have such a direct relationship with Xbox any more, but his messianic passion is still inspiring for any game fan.

71 JULIEN MERCERON WORLDWIDE TECHNOLOGY DIRECTOR, SQUARE ENIX

Have you noticed how good *Hitman* has been? *Absolution* and *Tomb Raider* look? It has a lot to do with the engine tech that Julien Merceron's team has enabled for Square Enix. We can't wait to see what they do next.

82 CASEY HUDSON EXECUTIVE PRODUCER, BIOWARE

As the leader of the *Mass Effect* series, Casey Hudson has spun one of videogames' great epics, capturing millions of players in the process. Holding all the threads as he has for the past six years is a real accomplishment.

81 JON BURTON DESIGN DIRECTOR, TRAVELLER'S TALES

Burton's *LEGO* series has proven evergreen, stretching to encompass superheroes and Hobbits, always with a good sense of humour and always brilliantly designed making them enjoyable for adults and children alike.

75 YOSHINORI ONO EXECUTIVE PRODUCER, CAPCOM

This man works so hard on promoting and managing *Street Fighter* that he became ill, and even then he kept tweeting. Delightfully off-message, while always remaining completely on-message ("*Street Fighter* is great"), he's one of videogames' great personalities.

70 SHINJI MIKAMI EXECUTIVE PRODUCER, TANGO GAMEWORKS

We're sure it's not just nostalgia for *Resi 4*'s first trailer, but the reveal of a new Shinji Mikami game, like survival horror *The Evil Within*, is an event. His personal goal is to make Japan "proud", and we're behind him all the way.

69 RAMI ISMAIL & JAN WILLEM NIJMAN CO-FOUNDER, VLAMBEER

Vlambeer is all about the boutique action game, controls tweaked just so in the likes of upcoming dogfighter *Luftrausers* and iOS's *Super Crate Box*. They're smart about the economics and politics of indie development, too.

87 SCOTT HENSON HEAD OF OPERATIONS, MICROSOFT STUDIOS EMEA

Now steering the likes of Rare and Lionhead, Henson was instrumental in Xbox Live's launch in 2003. His connection with Microsoft's Redmond HQ and knowledge of the platform makes him an able lead.

79 JESSE SCHELL CEO, SCHELL GAMES

If you want to know what place games will take in the future, you'd do well to listen to Jesse Schell, CEO of 'transformational game' developer Schell Games. He was once a ride designer for Disney, and now thinks a lot about how games affect society and the nature of fun.

74 KATSUHIRO HARADA GAME DIRECTOR, NAMCO BANDAI

Ono's counterpart and rival is Katsuhiro Harada, who plays the hardman to Ono's clown and leads Namco's *Tekken* series. Their play-sparring has profited both games and even resulted in *Street Fighter X Tekken*.

68 STEPHANE D'ASTOUS GENERAL MANAGER, EIDOS MONTREAL

Imagine setting up a brand new studio, then going straight to work on one of the most complex and beloved games in the world. Stephane D'Astous pulled it off with *Deus Ex: Human Revolution*, and is doing it again with *Thief*.

86 SUDA 51 CEO, GRASSHOPPER MANUFACTURE

Making games that celebrate Japanese culture while referencing the West, all the time playing with videogames' form and function, Suda 51 defines any other convention than his own. He is certainly one of gaming's treasures.

78 JASON ROHRER DESIGNER

Having demonstrated the capacity for games to convey emotion and tell stories through their rules, Rohrer is now the poster boy for the idea of games as art. His will to challenge and his technical knowledge makes him worthy of that.

85 AUSTIN WINTORY COMPOSER

His resonant, haunting music for PS3 title *Journey* was one thing. But his characterful and dynamic silent movie-meets-ragtime-via-jazz for XBLA's *Monaco* is quite another. The range he can muster is extraordinary.

84 DAVID BRABEN CHAIRMAN, FRONTIER DEVELOPMENTS

It hasn't been announced for any Xbox platform, but let's consider it an unsaid stretch goal in *Elite: Dangerous*' successful Kickstarter campaign. Braben's studio produces some of Kinect's best games, too.

77 CRAIG SULLIVAN CREATIVE DIRECTOR, CRITERION GAMES

Sullivan and his team at Criterion have proved they can nail arcade-tight racing in open cities, with oncoming traffic, broken glass, and billboards to smash everywhere.

73 ADRIAN CHMIELARZ GAME DESIGNER, THE ASTRONAUTS

He's outspoken, smart, has made schlocky action games (*Bulletstorm*, *Painkiller*) and has a sensitive side (he's making combat-less horror/story game *The Vanishing of Ethan Carter*). What's not to like about Adrian Chmielarz?

72 JAKE SOLOMON LEAD DESIGNER, FIRAXIS GAMES

It takes a lot to remake a classic, especially when it's in the unfashionable genre of turn-based strategy. But Jake Solomon took *XCOM: Enemy Unknown* on and triumphed, modernising a game we didn't think could be improved.

"It takes a lot to remake a classic, but Jake Solomon did just that"

67 LELAND YEE CALIFORNIA STATE SENATOR

This US politician has led a tenacious campaign against videogames for nearly a decade, using the scantest evidence to claim that violent videogames are a "public health matter" causing minors to act violently, representing a mainstream view that videogames need to contest.

66 EMMETT SHEAR

CO-FOUNDER, TWITCH



The way we enjoy games forever changed when we began to stream them online. Emmett Shear's Twitch is the leading service, making new gaming celebs and broadening games' potential as a form of entertainment.

"Twitch broadens games' potential as a form of entertainment"

65



JAAKKO IISALO

CREATIVE DIRECTOR, ROVIO ENTERTAINMENT

The man who made *Angry Birds* brought videogames to huge new audiences, with over a billion downloads so far. Microsoft has to hope that Xbox is as attractive a platform to Iisalo as iPhone and iPad evidently are.

64



ARNT JENSEN

GAME DIRECTOR, PLAYDEAD

One look at *Limbo* is all it takes to get sucked into its grim little world – one that isn't without its mischievous side. We're hoping that Arnt Jensen can repeat the trick for Playdead's next indie opus.

63 YANNIS MALLAT

CEO, UBISOFT MONTREAL



Headed by Yanniss Mallat, Ubisoft's lead studio is behind its leading properties: *Splinter Cell*, *Assassin's Creed*, *Far Cry*, and *Prince of Persia*. It's an impressive list that makes Mallat something of a stellar hitmaker.

62

PATRICIA VANCE
PRESIDENT, ENTERTAINMENT SOFTWARE RATING BOARD



With the US the world's most lucrative game market, it's organisations like Vance's ESRB that act as gaming's moral code, defining how violent they can be and acting as a defence against criticism of games' mature themes.

61



JOHN CARMACK

TECHNICAL DIRECTOR, ID SOFTWARE

Rage may not have been the hit id was hoping for, and it suffered from a few technical issues, but few games can match the level of unique detail that Carmack's visionary work allowed it to display.

60



CEVAT YERLI

CEO, CRYTEK

Along with his brothers, Cevat Yerli has built a company that has become synonymous with graphics technology, its games sporting techniques and art detail that others can only wish for. Crytek's relentless pursuit of progression is admirable.

59



JADE RAYMOND

MANAGING DIRECTOR, UBISOFT TORONTO

From *The Sims Online* to *Assassin's Creed*, Jade Raymond's back catalogue is impressive enough, but she's also thinking about the future by building one of the world's largest studios from scratch.

58



CHET FALISZEK & ERIK WOLPAW

WRITERS, VALVE SOFTWARE

Not only is the writing in games like *Portal 2* sharply funny, it's brilliantly tuned for a videogame's structure. Chet Faliszek and Erik Wolpaw's knowledge of the medium gives their work a clarity that shines through.

55



ANTHONY BURCH

WRITER, GEARBOX

Borderlands 2 is great for many reasons, but a really big one is its genuine laugh-out-loud funny, sometimes touching, and often surprising writing. Behind those characters, those situations and those one-liners is the rare talent of writer Anthony Burch.

54



PALMER LUCKEY

FOUNDER, OCULUSVR

Genuinely future-gazing new consumer technology like Oculus Rift doesn't come around very often. In bringing VR to your home, Palmer Luckey has helped realise a long-held promise for games. We can't wait to see it being implemented in consoles.

53



TIM SCHAFER

FOUNDER, DOUBLE FINE PRODUCTIONS

Tim Schafer's charming wit is allied with steely foresight – the kind that found Double Fine success making the likes of *Costume Quest* and *Happy Action Theater* for XBLA rather than focusing on big releases, and the first big win on Kickstarter. What's next?

52



SEFTON HILL

GAME DIRECTOR, ROCKSTEADY STUDIOS

It's been said many times before but we'll say it again: it takes a studio of rare talent to make a great game based on a superhero, and Sefton Hill's Rocksteady pulled it off in spades with *Batman: Arkham Asylum*.

57



J.J. ABRAMS

DIRECTOR

From discussing collaborating with Valve on a *Portal* or *Half-Life* movie to citing being inspired by *Limbo* and PS3's *Journey*, J.J. Abrams has been circling gaming for a while. His talent for storytelling could be a very positive influence on the form.

56



DEREK YU

DESIGNER, MOSSMOUTH

Mossmouth is basically one person, Derek Yu, who made the brilliant *Spelunky*, one of the most engaging, gripping games on Xbox. Yu isn't just a great designer, though – he also plays a vital role in the indie community, editing TIGSource.

51



ATSUSHI INABA

PRODUCER, PLATINUM GAMES

Behind the sparky talent of designers like Hideki Kamiya sits the steady hand of Atsushi Inaba, who has helped carve Platinum Games' status as one of the most exciting studios in the world while retaining its fierce independence.

50



AMY HENNIG

GAME DIRECTOR, NAUGHTY DOG

If there's a standard of writing and characterisation that modern games need to live up to, it's that of Amy Hennig and her work on the *Uncharted* games. Funny, touching and dramatic, her characters are people you want to play with.

49

NATE WELLS
LEAD ARTIST, NAUGHTY DOG



Though he recently departed Irrational for Sony's Naughty Dog, Nate Wells' expansive and inspirational art imagination still lives on in the worlds of *BioShock*'s Rapture and Columbia.

48



JAKE RODKIN

DESIGN AND STORY LEAD, TELLTALE GAMES

We can all agree that Telltale's episodic adventure *The Walking Dead* was one of the standout games of last year, right? Well, Jake Rodkin was the co-writer and designer behind it. His work has led to a new appreciation of the adventure game.

47



PAUL REICHE III

PRESIDENT, TOYS FOR BOB

As the head of the developer that created *Skylanders*, Paul Reiche III has achieved something that few developers can match – establishing a new children's game and toy franchise that rivals *Pokemon*. All in just a couple of years.

46



KRIS PIOTROWSKI

CREATIVE DIRECTOR, CAPYBARA GAMES

Capybara Games is a small dev with a knack for producing polished, beautiful-looking and original games, from the DS's *Clash of Heroes* to upcoming XBLA title *Super Time Force*. It's much down to its creative director, who gets into every aspect of production.

45

CHRIS CHARLA
PORTFOLIO DIRECTOR, MICROSOFT STUDIOS



As downloadable games become more central to Xbox, so too does Chris Charla, who shapes Microsoft's digital publishing portfolio on XBLA and more. Look out for his blog, where he shares his interest in weird games.

44

VIKTOR ANTONOV
VISUAL DESIGN DIRECTOR, ZENIMAX MEDIA



From his stunning work on games like *Half-Life 2* to *Dishonored*, Antonov applies both a painterly and architect's eye to videogame environments with unique precision, washing their spaces with light to guide your eye, and introducing eerie detail to unsettle you.

43

CLINT HOCKING

DESIGNER, VALVE SOFTWARE
You might think *Far Cry 3* the better game, but Hocking's *Far Cry 2* was a more thoughtful one. Fascinated by game rules' capacity to tell stories, he was recently snapped up by Valve to work on... *Half-Life 3*, perhaps?



42

HARVEY SMITH AND RAPHAEL COLANTONIO

CREATIVE DIRECTORS, ARKANE STUDIOS

With *Dishonored*, Harvey Smith and Raphael Colantonio proved there's a demand for complex, inspired and weird blockbusters that encourage you to think your way through and play them your way: the way games should be.



41

JENOVA CHEN

FOUNDER, THATGAMECOMPANY
With *Journey* the last of its projects for Sony, thatgamecompany is now free to bring its visually stunning and thoughtfully artful games to Xbox. Led by Jenova Chen, the company's real talent is the fact that its games are also lovely to play.



40

ANITA SARKEESIAN

CRITIC, FEMINIST FREQUENCY
The common depiction of women and the lack of female representation in the industry is a serious problem for games' ongoing development as a serious cultural form. Sarkeesian is doing much to voice these concerns loudly.



39

SATORU IWATA

PRESIDENT, NINTENDO

Every developer, publisher and platform holder can still learn from Nintendo's eye for a popular idea and care and talent for making it perfectly, and from Iwata's will to speak directly and enthusiastically with players.



38

ANTTI ILVESSUO

CREATIVE DIRECTOR, REDLIX
Trials is one of XBLA's evergreen series, its exacting challenge the result of some seriously tight design that also has a wicked sense of fun (by which we mean sadism). It's a mirror, then, of its creative director, Antti Ilvessuo.



37

PADDY BURNS

CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER, 4J
As one of the team that squeezed the infinite worlds of *Minecraft* onto Xbox, Paddy Burns performed a technical feat with the kind of reward that comes with four-player split-screen creation and managing XBLA's biggest game.



36

TED WOOLSEY

SENIOR DIRECTOR, MICROSOFT STUDIOS
With a background in translation, Woolsey worked on bringing *Final Fantasy VI* and *Chrono Trigger* to the West, and now brings games to all Microsoft platforms, from Xbox to Windows Phone. Microsoft's vision of games working across them is down to him.



35

MARC DOYLE

CO-FOUNDER, METACRITIC
In charge of Metacritic's game listings, Doyle indirectly – or perhaps not so indirectly due to the secret weightings he gives publications – affects both the pride and fortunes of devs. His Metacritic, after all, help define their reputations.



34

FRANK GIBEAU

PRESIDENT, EA LABELS
The biggest game publisher in the world is facing many challenges, and Frank Gibeau is tasked with leading its four internal labels, which represent all of EA's biggest franchises, to bring the supertanker around.



33

DAVID HELGASON

CEO, UNITY TECHNOLOGIES
The free-to-use Unity engine is the technology behind an increasing number of games on all platforms and of all styles. It's been used to make everything from retro 2D curios to 3D blockbusters.



32

PERRY CHEN

CEO, KICKSTARTER
Perry Chen's company, Kickstarter, has given developers an amazing new way of amassing the money they need to make games without having to bow to publishers' tastes. That means a greater variety of games being produced – a great thing for all.



30

HIDETAKA MIYAZAKI

GAME DIRECTOR, FROM SOFTWARE

The creator of *Dark Souls* isn't working on the sequel *Dark Souls 2*, to the wringing of hands from many diehard fans, but maybe that means he's turning his eye to making a new series as thrillingly and brutally absorbing?



28

HIDEKI KAMIYA

GAME DIRECTOR, PLATINUM GAMES
Few game designers have quite the grasp on the action game as Hideki Kamiya. For proof, just remember the dizzying depth and snappy feel of *Bayonetta* and *Viewtiful Joe*. His brilliantly bold personality is a joy to read on Twitter, too.



27

DAN GREENAWALT

CREATIVE DIRECTOR, TURN 10

Forza has rapidly become a thoroughbred Microsoft series, its taut balance of arcade feel and simulation challenge enough to make it one of the world's leading racers. A big reason why is surely Greenawalt's unabashed passion for cars.



29

STEVE BALLMER

CEO, MICROSOFT

Xbox's ultimate fate rests with Microsoft's idiosyncratic head Steve Ballmer, under whose leadership the company recently posted quarterly revenue results that are up 18 per cent year-on-year. Good news for Microsoft is good news for Xbox, too.



26

JOSH HOLMES

CREATIVE DIRECTOR, 343 INDUSTRIES
343 proved with *Halo 4* that the series is in extremely capable hands, though we'd love to see it shake things up a bit. That's the responsibility of Josh Holmes, surely hard at work at translating the legend to the next generation.



25

JOSEPH STATEN

DESIGN DIRECTOR, BUNGIE
The reveal of a brand new game property is a too-rare occasion today, especially one as huge as *Destiny*. The fact that Bungie is making *Destiny* one of the most exciting propositions in games today, and its fate lies largely with Staten.



24

MARC WHITTEN

CORPORATE VICE PRESIDENT OF XBOX LIVE

Having already led Xbox Live for six years, Whitten has the weighty job of maintaining its position as the leading gaming network for the next gen. If that wasn't enough, he's now also in charge of Kinect's ongoing development.



22

YVES GUILLEMET

CEO, UBISOFT
Never underestimate Ubisoft. In the main, its games are smart, distinctive and ambitious, taking judicious risk and showing a will to do things differently. This direction comes from Yves Guillemot, who has steered the company to consistent growth.



21

PETER MOORE

CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER, EA
He's hotly tipped to be EA's next CEO, following John Riccitiello's departure in March, and we'd welcome him in the role. Look to his strong leadership of EA Sports and PR ability, which balances characterful disclosure and company line.



20

ROBERT KOTICK

CEO, ACTIVISION BLIZZARD
Head of an evil empire or shrewd businessman forging success while his competitors struggle? We'd go with the latter. He's not a risk taker, sure, but at least he's carved a situation in which he can afford to support big games to the hilt.



19 PHIL HARRISON CORPORATE VP, MICROSOFT STUDIOS EMEA



Sony's head of worldwide studios moving to Microsoft was a surprise. But Harrison's eye for fantastic and progressive games and dev talent (he signed *LittleBigPlanet* and Media Molecule) could reap great rewards.

"Harrison's eye for fantastic games could reap great rewards"

18 ALEX KIPMAN GENERAL MANAGER OF INCUBATION, MICROSOFT



One of the leads behind Kinect, Alex Kipman is especially interested in bringing new forms of interaction to games and the wider world. After all, it was Kipman who fought to keep Kinect open so hackers could use it.

17 KEN LEVINE CREATIVE DIRECTOR, IRRATIONAL GAMES



Few developers have the drive to make worlds as imaginative as those of *BioShock*, and the courage to introduce themes as unusual as Ayn Rand and manifest destiny. Fewer still can package them up in a form so universally appealing to play.

16 HIDEO KOJIMA DIRECTOR, KOJIMA PRODUCTIONS



It's easy to scoff at Kojima's interminable cutscenes and bizarre and incoherent storylines, but never forget the sharp, playful design that underpins his games, most of which are stone-cold classics.

15 TIM COOK CEO, APPLE



Apple occupying a high place in a list about Xbox? Absolutely. It's a measure of the extent to which Apple has transformed the game market through iPhone, iPad and the App Store, from pricing to design.

14 RORY READ CEO, AMD



The power of the Xbox One is largely down to what kind of chip Rory Read and his company can produce for the money Microsoft is willing to pay for it. The success of the new console will depend on the custom tech that AMD has built for it.

13 TODD HOWARD EXEC PRODUCER, BETHESDA



No one makes sprawling fantasy and science fiction RPGs like Bethesda: *Elder Scrolls* and *Fallout 3* have a unique capacity to touch your imagination like few other games. And behind each of them is Todd Howard.

12 DAVID RUTTER LEAD PRODUCER, EA SPORTS



A lot of *FIFA*'s rise as the premier football game can be placed at Rutter's feet. His passion for both the real game and the virtual one is now part of *FIFA*'s very DNA, a result of his dual understanding of what makes football and videogames good.

11 BRANDON BECK & MARC MERRILL CO-FOUNDERS, RIOT GAMES



Riot's game *League of Legends* is a true blockbuster, with a peak of five million players playing at once, and 12 million playing every day. Bringing it to Xbox would be a fabulous achievement.

10 PATRICK BACH EXECUTIVE PRODUCER, DICE



For an alternative to *CoD*'s comic book balderdash, look to Bach and his team's work on *Battlefield*. Their more sober take on war is no less thunderous, Bach's vision for dynamic and open conflict serving a more progressive design philosophy.

09 DAVID VONDERHAAR STUDIO DESIGN DIRECTOR, TREYARCH



Treyarch's *Call of Duty: Black Ops* series has a sense of fun and bombast that has pushed the format the furthest since *CoD4*, introducing to it zombies, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and rock band *Avenged Sevenfold*. Yet under the silliness, Vonderhaar's games still have real care and rigour.

08 SAM & DAN HOUSER CO-FOUNDERS, ROCKSTAR



Rockstar's not just about *GTA*. From *Red Dead Redemption* to *Bully*, the Houser brothers' amazing track record making games that tap new themes and touch cultural nerves is pretty much unparalleled.

07 GABE NEWELL MANAGING DIRECTOR, VALVE SOFTWARE



Valve might not be as active on console as on PC, but few other studios are doing as much to shake up the traditional ways games are made and sold. Microsoft has to be sitting up and taking notice of the revolution Newell's helped to start.

06 TIM SWEENEY FOUNDER, EPIC GAMES



The current gen has been built to a large extent on Epic's Unreal Engine, and now Tim Sweeney, its architect, will be hoping it'll form the bedrock for the next gen, too. That he also heads the studio behind *Gears* tops out his achievements.

04 DON MATTRICK PRESIDENT, INTERACTIVE ENTERTAINMENT BUSINESS, MICROSOFT



Xbox is just one part of Matrick's job, which spans gaming, music and video. He's also responsible for the hardware, software and networking that drives Microsoft's entertainment machine his decisions are key.

03 MARKUS 'NOTCH' PERSSON FOUNDER, MOJANG



He's no longer making *Minecraft*, but Notch is still a huge figure as a result of what his game has achieved, bringing in new players and inspiring new indie devs. Every platform holder has to be hoping he brings his next project, *Ox10c*, to their machine.

02 ERIC HIRSHBERG CEO, ACTIVISION PUBLISHING



The biggest games just keep getting bigger because of Hirshberg, the man in charge of Activision's games. His fixed eye on the big catches — *CoD*, *Destiny* and *Skylanders* — makes for the kind of event launches that fuel the industry.

05 PHIL SPENCER CORPORATE VICE PRESIDENT, MICROSOFT STUDIOS



Spencer's first-party team provides a benchmark for Xbox gaming, from *Halo* to *Forza*, and exploring new forms of design for new hardware like Kinect. With a brand new platform to prove, it's gearing up for a run of 15 new Xbox exclusives.

01

LESLIE BENZIES PRESIDENT, ROCKSTAR NORTH

Let's call it. *Grand Theft Auto* is the biggest game on Xbox, and Leslie Benzie has been in charge of it since *GTA III*. His decisions set the bar for quality, for depth, for the status *GTA* holds in wider culture, and for also never losing sight of *GTA* being a lovely, big, dumb game we can all be proud of. There's a reason why *GTA IV* is still one of the most-played games on Xbox 360, and Benzie is at the centre of it.



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 **XBOX 360.**

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THE 10 WORST MONTHS IN XBOX 360 HISTORY

From summer droughts to wintry deserts, we count down the worst times there have been to be an Xbox gamer - with the 'scientific' help of videogame review aggregate site Metacritic

Words: Alex Dale

10 February 2008
Average Metacritic score: 64.2% (20 games)

Highest scoring game:

Devil May Cry 4 (84)

In February 2008, the fourth and final entry in the traditional *Devil May Cry* lineage was the sole highlight. And even then, we think we preferred *DMC3*. (Although *Lost Odyssey*, which scored 78, is

one of the best JRPGs of the generation, and can count itself unlucky to have scored so poorly, in our opinion).

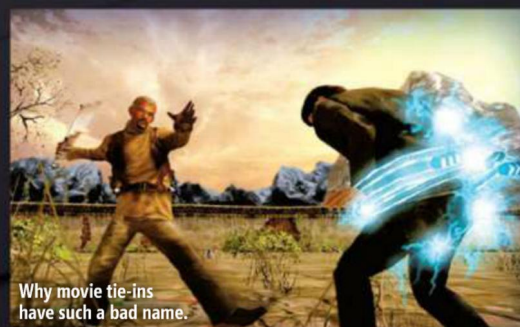
Lowest scoring game:

Juniper: Griffin's Story (29)

Ugh. Just, ugh. You'd get more flavour from sucking a used teabag than from this horrid hack-job of a platformer. Its only redeeming feature was its awkward camera, which prevented you from ever getting a clear view of the horrifying, terrifying tedium you were being subjected to.

Other lowlights: *Turning Point: Fall of Liberty* (43) imagined how history would go if Winston Churchill had died before World War II. We'd all be blowing up tanks by sneaking into sewers and gluing explosives onto their undercarriages, apparently...

Dante must repeat the Nero levels, in reverse order.



Why movie tie-ins have such a bad name.



Come back! It's not what it looks like!

Xbox 360's Worst Months



A cockney froat-jab from the Batman.



87 overall, but we gave it top marks.

9 August 2009 Average Metacritic score: 64% (15 games)

Highest scoring game:

Batman: Arkham Asylum (92)

The magnificent Arkham Asylum stood out amongst the rest of the manufactured dross this month. Looking back, no other game this gen has had more of a positive impact on game development than Rocksteady's batty *Metroid* tribute.

Lowest scoring game:

Raven Squad:

Operation Hidden Dagger (38)

A four-hour campaign? Birdbrained AI? Repetitive level design? Team-mates who don't understand the laws of physics? Accents so bad they'd make Dick Van Dyke wince? Real-time strategy segments that boast no scope for strategy? A boring FPS devoid of entertainment? That's so *Raven Squad*.



Brown. That's the colour of excitement there.

Other lowlights: *GI Joe: The Rise of Cobra* (42) came on strong like a modern-day Ikari Warriors, but ended up missing the target as regularly as the Cobra Commander's misfiring troops. *Watchmen: The End is Nigh* (44) could've spawned an intriguing action-adventure or a lame-o beat 'em up. Guess which one this is?



What's even happening with the perspective, here?



8 May 2007 Average Metacritic score: 63.9 (16 games)

Highest scoring game:

Forza Motorsport 2 (90)

The impressive-but-utilitarian *Forza Motorsport 1* on the original Xbox established *Forza* as a potential *Gran Turismo* botherer - *Forza 2* finished the job. Although it's since been eclipsed by two stunning sequels, *Forza 2* was the first 'serious' car sim to get the balance right between accessibility and nerdish completism. It beat out *Mad Tracks* by a 'narrow' 28% average for the bragging rights to call itself the best racing game of May 2007.

Lowest

scoring game:

Centipede & Millipede (55)

16 games were released in May 2007, none of which were out and out stinkers. Instead, the

month's appearance in this list can be attributed to a veritable deluge of 5/10-calibre averageness. *Centipede & Millipede* was the worst of a dull bunch - a pair of ancient shooters, 'garnished' with a garish HD makeover. Still, um, at least they had legs.

Other lowlights: The charge of the 5/10 brigade continued with *Xevious* (56), *Shrek the Third* (56), *Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End* (58), *Double Dragon* (57) and *Aegis Wing* (58) causing much shrugging of shoulders. *Spider-Man 3*, *Surf's Up* and *Shadowrun* did little to raise standards, all scoring in the low-to-mid 60s.



Tsk, tsk, tsk. A tedious collection of Kinect mini-games.



Lowest scoring game:

Ice Age: Continental Drift - Arctic Games (43)

Some series get

better with age, like a fine wine. *Ice Age*'s aging process is more comparable to a bottle of Frijol left on top of a boiler. And so the tired, uninspired fourth film got the game tie-in it deserved - a collection of 'wacky' prehistoric Winter Sports that were undoubtedly 'Better With Kinect', in the sense that the woefully inaccurate motion controls helped players to quickly wise up to the fact that they were playing with a huge mammoth turd.

Other lowlights: Not even the developer's mothers held out much hope for *Bellator: MMA Onslaught* (47) or *Adidas miCoach* (54).



Even MMA fans weren't impressed with this one.



Apparently, you can't beat *GTA*. So why try?

6 April 2008
Average Metacritic score: 62.6% (7 games)

Highest scoring game: *Grand Theft Auto IV* (98)
Wait! How can a month where *GTA IV* - the highest rated Xbox 360 game of all time - also be the sixth worst in Xbox 360 history? Well, the thought of going up against *GTA* had all the other publishers literally soiling themselves. So the rest of April's line-up was padded out by some real no-hoper dross.

Lowest scoring game: *Rocky & Bullwinkle* (37)

This 'effort' from Zen Studios used the Xbox LIVE Vision Camera add-on, which was last spotted in the wild by a group of ornithologists in the Adirondack Mountains in September 2009, and is now probably extinct.



Rocky and Bullwinkle - a crisis of technology.

Other lowlights: *Mr Driller Online* (45) took a fun, cheery template and then stripped it of almost all its single-player content.



A single glance tells you all you need to know. Avoid.



5 January 2009
Average Metacritic score: 60.9% (9 games)

Highest scoring game: *Skate 2* (84)

There's no worse time to release a game than January, when the world's still recovering from the universal lapse in financial responsibility that is Christmas. EA's *Skate 2* went on a one-game crusade to raise the standards during a particularly bleak opening to 2009. But while this cool sequel cemented *Skate*'s reputation as the natural successor to *Tony Hawk*, some outlets criticised it for being too similar to its predecessor.

Lowest scoring game: *FunTown Mahjong* (44)

This is a virtual version of 16-tile Mahjong - a multiplayer game that uses the same tiles as the solitaire-type matching game more commonly associated with the name in the West. Not familiar? Don't worry - 19 pages of badly-translated instructions are on hand to help you out. It's a wonky attempt to replicate something that can be found for free on PC.



Brothers stare at the dice, knowing one of them must die.

Other lowlights: *Interpol: The Trail of Dr Chaos* (45) is a rather grand title for a hide and seek game, and *Afro Samurai* (65) had a fun name but precious little else going for it.

"*GTA IV* scored 98 - how is it in the sixth worst month?"

4 December 2008
Average Metacritic score: 60.1% (8 games)

Highest scoring game: *Prince of Persia* (81)

No, this isn't the excellent *Sands of Time* re-release. It is, in fact, that cel-shaded open world *Prince of Persia* reboot that Ubisoft quickly and quietly abandoned about six seconds after launch. Don't remember it? Watch enough horror films before bedtime and you'll remember it soon enough.

Lowest scoring game: *Destroy All Humans! Path of the Furon* (34)

Destroy All Humans! was at one point a fairly well-regarded series; after all, how could anyone be against *GTA* with anal probes? THQ ran the property into the ground though, and by the time this monotonous effort oozed onto shop shelves, the series was all but dead in the water.

Other lowlights: *Rise of the Argonauts* (54) makes us think Codies made the right decision in sticking to racing games. *Puzzle Arcade* (49) is a compilation of 35 jigsaws, with the twist being ahh who cares you've probably skipped to the next section already.



A gentleman would cover her up with his shield.

HINDSIGHT IS 20%/20%

Review scores aren't fixed points - perceptions shift and change over time and games once considered classics are superseded by newer, better games. With that in mind, let us travel back into Metacritic's gloomy past and shine a light on some of the months that, with the benefit of hindsight, weren't all they were cracked up to be...

October 2006
Average Metacritic score: 72.3% (13 games)

Highest scoring game: *Splinter Cell: Double Agent* (85)
Knowing now what was in store for us in the future, the average review scores *Marvel: Ultimate Alliance* (82), *NFS: Carbon* (77) and *Splinter Cell: Double Agent* (85) seem laughably optimistic.



Lowest scoring game: *TotemBall* (44)
Considering Xbox Live Vision Camera game *TotemBall* is a free download, would you consider it mean-spirited if we said it was overpriced by at least 800 Microsoft Points?



Other lowlights: *Phantasy Star Universe* (64) failed to capture the spirit of the Dreamcast original, whereas *Cars* (65) was the kind of racing game you got in 2006 that led to duffers like *Need For Speed: Carbon* getting a 77 per cent average...



November 2005
Average Metacritic score: 75.6%

Highest scoring game: *Call of Duty 2* (89)
CoD2 is in fact the only launch title that's still worth playing today. The likes of *Condemned* (81) *PGR 3* (88) were fun, but look and play like games from another era. Because, really, they are.



Xbox 360's Worst Months



Great game, and it's an easy 200 Gamerpoints, too.

3 November 2010 Average Metacritic score: 60% (43 games)

Highest scoring game: *Pac-Man Championship Edition DX* (93)

September-November is usually reserved for the big-hitters, so it's a surprise to see November 2010 charting this high. What happened? Well, several big franchises disappointed - *AC: Brotherhood* and *CoD: Black Ops* both posted sub-90 Metacritic scores. But their failure was offset by the pure brilliance of *Pac-Man: Championship Edition*, one of the best score-attack games of all time. So what explains the disaster that was Nov 2010?



Lowest scoring game: *Deca Sports Freedom* (26)

The Kinect launch, that's what. *Dance Central* was the only launch title to average over 80%. Hudson's *Deca Sports Freedom* was the worst; a risible sports compilation that decided to give the 1:1 body tracking thing a miss all together, with your body movements instead triggering laughably hammy canned animations.

Other lowlights: How much space have we got? *Zumba Fitness: Join the Party* (42), *Game Party: In Motion* (33), *Fighters Uncaged* (32) and others all ensured the Kinect launch was an epic fail.

Oh, Kinect. Do please get better.

2 December 2007 Average Metacritic score: 59.4% (10 games)

Highest scoring game:

Sensible World of Soccer (81)
Thank the Xbox gods for *SWoS'* existence, otherwise we'd be sat here talking about *GripShift* or *MX vs ATV Untamed*, or some of the other gumpf that was released in the dying embers of 2007. This was an excellent conversion of an Amiga classic, and we'd go as far to say it's still the best arcade-y football game around today. As an added bonus, your writer is in the game, as part of the special *Gamesmaster* team! Although Codemasters made him the worst player on the team. So on second thoughts, let's just pretend we've been talking about *GripShift*.



Looks like 1989. Plays like forever.

Lowest scoring game: *The History Channel: Battle for the Pacific* (35)

We've seen North Korean encyclopedias that are more heavily invested in realism than this sub-standard *Call of Duty* clone. On the plus side, it's only two hours long. On the downside, it still manages to drag a bit.

Other lowlights: *The Golden Compass* (41) was just one of many terrible Sega-published movie tie-ins to afflict the Xbox 360 throughout its life.



Please. Just stop with the bad movie tie-ins.



Most meaningless title winner, 2006.

1 December 2006 Average Metacritic score: 54.8% (5 games)

Highest scoring game: *Assault Heroes* (79)

It's official - December 2006 was the worst month in the entirety of the Xbox 360's existence (to date, at least). A dull, grey month gave rise to a succession of dull, grey games, with *Assault Heroes* - a rather uninspired top-down shooter - being the closest December 2006 came to gifting us a highlight. The second best game? That goes to *Star Trek: Legacy* (64), a long-winded strategy game so crushingly dull that we can't even muster the energy to make a Trekkie gag.

Lowest scoring game: *Pimp My Ride* (38)

An atrocious blend of PS2-calibre driving and baboon-calibre rhythm action 'ghostriding' bits. Perhaps it's all part of a metajoke and around the half way mark Xzibit rocks up to 'pimp' the game into something presentable, but our test subjects (AKA 'work experience candidates') lost their mental faculties long before that could happen.

Other lowlights: Buggy combat game *Novadrome* (50) was as relentlessly average as its Metacritic score suggests. While it's no hidden gem, *New Rally-X's* Metacritic score of 43 seems harsh to us. A lot of the early retro stuff was pounced upon by critics for some reason.

(28 games)

Lowest scoring game: *FIFA 06: Road To FIFA World Cup* (62)
FIFA 06: RTFWC bore all the hallmarks of a game that needed to stay in the oven for another two years, and as an added kicker, it was dismally short of content, not even featuring the Cup itself.



Other lowlights: *Perfect Dark Zero* (81) has a higher Metacritic score than *Binary Domain* (74), *Darkness II* (80), *Metro 2033* (77) and *Spec Ops: The Line* (76). The launch day goggles also afflicted all who reviewed *Kameo: Elements of Power* (79).



January 2006
Average Metacritic score: 79% (1 game)

Highest scoring game: *Marble Blast Ultra* (79)
With an average score of 79%, Jan 2006 is the second best month for Xbox games of all time. The highlight was this charming Arcade title, a homage to the likes of *Monkey Ball* and *Marble Madness*.



Lowest scoring game: *Marble Blast Ultra* (79)
On the flipside, you had this rather uninspiring effort. It was ugly, only 60 screens long (the first 30 could be completed by the family pet), and had a completely nonsensical multiplayer element.



Other lowlights: Er, you could try *Marble Blast Ultra* (79), except it's been de-listed, so no you can't do that. This has kinda proved that the entire feature has been based on bad science, hasn't it? Oh well. At least some good has finally come from *Marble Blast Ultra*.



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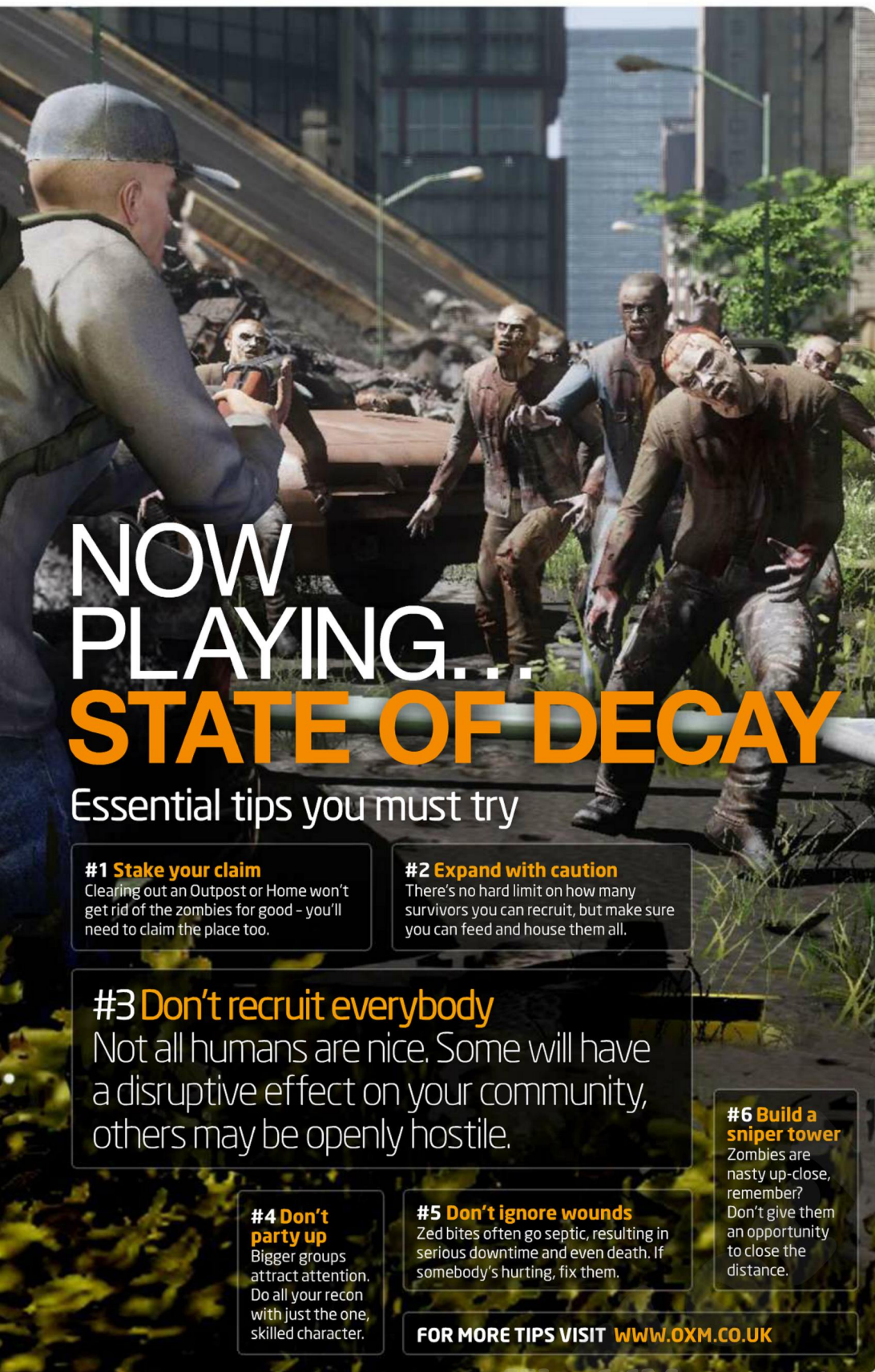
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THE FULL 360

EXPANDING YOUR XBOX ONLINE AND BEYOND



NOW PLAYING... STATE OF DECAY

Essential tips you must try

#1 Stake your claim

Clearing out an Outpost or Home won't get rid of the zombies for good - you'll need to claim the place too.

#2 Expand with caution

There's no hard limit on how many survivors you can recruit, but make sure you can feed and house them all.

#3 Don't recruit everybody

Not all humans are nice. Some will have a disruptive effect on your community, others may be openly hostile.

#4 Don't party up

Bigger groups attract attention. Do all your recon with just the one, skilled character.

#5 Don't ignore wounds

Zed bites often go septic, resulting in serious downtime and even death. If somebody's hurting, fix them.

#6 Build a sniper tower

Zombies are nasty up-close, remember? Don't give them an opportunity to close the distance.

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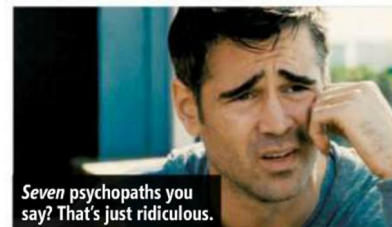
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Seven psychopaths you say? That's just ridiculous.

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Were ninjas still as impressive in 2004?

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How many of these had you fooled?

How to...

Your guide to getting the best Achievements and in-game extras

SEE A DRUNK MAN UNDERWATER IN **FAR CRY 3**

Far Cry 3 has its fair share of bizarre moments, but this odd Easter egg has to be one of the silliest. In order to find it, all you have to do is head to the X:806.4 and Y:636.5 co-ordinates on the map. Once you get there, run towards the shore and straight into the water. If you take a look around the sea floor, you should be able to see a drunken soldier cradled around a toilet bowl as if he's just about to be sick in it. Another definition of insanity, perhaps.



BE GREETED BY A REAVER IN **GEARS OF WAR: JUDGMENT**

In the Aftermath campaign there's a part where you have to reach a walkway outside the control room. When you get there, you'll see a Longshot – use it to find and shoot a Lambent sitting on top of a crane way off in the distance. When you kill the Lambent, a Reaver will write the word "HI" in the sky, then blow up to dot the 'I'. How thoughtful.



SEE DOOMSDAY'S 'DEATH OF SUPERMAN' OUTFIT IN **INJUSTICE**



Although Doomsday's natty green outfit from 'The Death of Superman' comic storyline isn't available in *Injustice*, you can still see it. Start a Versus match with both players controlling Doomsday. One should choose the normal Doomsday skin, the other the Regime skin. Now play on the Fortress of Solitude stage where, since both skins are being used by the players, the background Doomsday is given a third skin: the green outfit from 'The Death of Superman'.

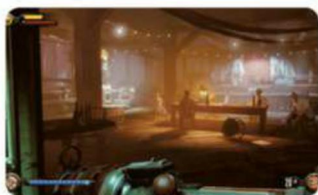
PLAY AS A WEREWOLF IN **TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 14**



The *Tiger Woods* games used to be a lot less serious than they are these days, which is why this slightly silly secret in *PGA Tour 14* took us by surprise. Play a practice round as EA's fictional golfer Scott Ratchman, and change the weather settings so that you're playing the game at night. It turns out that when the moon comes up, Scott Ratchman turns into a werewolf. We're fairly sure that isn't part of the PGA dress code.

"Play a round of night golf with Scott Ratchman and he'll turn into a werewolf"

HEAR MUSIC FROM THE FUTURE IN **BIOSHOCK INFINITE**



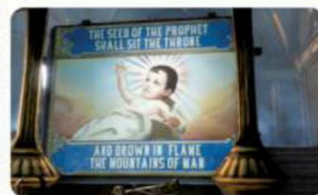
As you probably already know, there are some old-timey versions of more recent songs tucked away in *BioShock Infinite*'s soundtrack, but you may have missed some. The Graveyard Shift bar in Shantytown, for example, has a gramophone playing the '80s classic *Tainted Love*.



Meanwhile, listen carefully to the jaunty barrel organ music playing away in the background while you're on the beach at Battleship Bay, and you may notice that it seems strangely familiar. That's because it's a cover of Cyndi Lauper's much-loved lady anthem *Girls Just Want To Have Fun*.



When you get to Albert Fink's house (shortly after you find a tear in time that reveals the real version of Cyndi Lauper's *Girls Just Want To Have Fun*), you'll see a gramophone sitting on top of a piano playing an old-time version of Tears For Fears' classic '80s tune *Everybody Wants To Rule The World*.



When you exit the gondola while you're on the way to Comstock House, you should also be able to hear a vintage take on REM's *Shiny Happy People*. This is just a small selection of the songs available to find, but for fear of story spoilers we won't reveal where the rest are.

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Borderlands 2: Psycho Pack

Level Krieg up in time for Tiny Tina

If you bought the Season Pass, it won't cover this boost to the shooty lootgasm that is *Borderlands 2*. The *Psycho Pack* gives you a sixth class to start from scratch – the screaming Krieg. How you play him depends on which skill tree you develop.

Dig into Bloodlust, and the tactic is to just keep going. Every second you're dealing damage boosts your Bloodlust to the maximum 100, at which point you can earn more boosts by cycling between grenades, guns and melee. Krieg has all the

fluid melee powers of Zer0, although with none of the sniping skills.

With the second build, Mania, the idea is to lose your shield and operate in a state of low health. It's a case of finding a balance between constantly taking damage and occasionally healing. Some skills take any overkill damage directly to Krieg's health bar, and shorten the cooldown on Krieg's healing Buzz Saw Rampage skill.

Finally, the Hellborn tree turns Krieg into a fiery Psycho from Frostburn Canyon. As you descend this tree, more and more things set you on fire, and you earn more

and more bonuses for being ablaze. As Krieg, you must keep your wits about you.

Krieg is great, but the idea of starting from scratch and rescuing Clap-Trap's eye all over again fills us with dread. If Gearbox just let us power through the first 30 levels, we'd be tempted by this.

XBOX 360 VERDICT
THE SCORE
Still fun, but feels like a slog at times
7

Metal Gear Rising: Revengeance Blade Wolf

Good doggie or big bad wolf?

How much does playing as a metallic canine quadruped matter to you? Because that's all *Blade Wolf* has going for it. Unless you count the recycled environments, vestigial story and the fact it takes less than an hour to finish.

It recounts the events leading up to LQ-84's battle against and subsequent partnership with Raiden, but dialogue is limited to snippy exchanges between the robot dog and his mistress, Mistral.

Price
560MP
£4.55

LQ-84's play style is a mite more involving. His attacks are a combination of claw slashes, tail swipes and long-range heat knife throws. Interestingly, he's built far more for stealth than out-and-out offence. Sneaking up on foes enables you to tap B for a one-hit instant kill, and Blade Wolf even has his own version of Zandatsu to carve cyborgs in two and pluck out their tasty power cores. Unfortunately,



the ferrous Fenrir can't be upgraded at any point, and the much-hyped all-new boss battle at the end is forgettable. Despite a promising premise, *Revengeance's* final DLC goes out with a limp whimper, not a triumphant howl.

XBOX 360 VERDICT
THE SCORE
One for only the biggest MGR fans
5

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Indie Games

The latest releases on Xbox Live Marketplace

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Don't Die Pluto

DEVELOPER: AJspartan

Sore about Pluto's planetary declassification? Wrong some rights by gobbling space rocks until the belittled spacelump grows big enough to teach Mars some manners. Duff, but funny.

RATING ★★★★★



Dead Sea II: Mutation

DEVELOPER: BM Games

BM Games' *Resi*-with-sharkmen is technically ambitious, but falters the second you fumble a finicky QTE and a man with a shark for a face bites your head off. Utterly risible then, but at least it helped us appreciate *Resi 6* that little bit more.

RATING ★★★★★



War Rapiar 43210

DEVELOPER: varga

Playing a point-and-click adventure to bulk up units used in a later action-RPG segment is a novel idea, but it's derailed by disturbingly misjudged gags about animal rape and enough f-bombs to make even Samuel L Jackson cringe. Brrr.

RATING ★★★★★



Zombie Compound

DEVELOPER: Smoodlez

For every Telltale game tackling zombies with care and attention, there are a hundred twin-stick XBLIG releases throwing us to the horde with nothing but gutless 8-bit weapons for protection. Brain hungry and brainless.

RATING ★★★★★



How To Get A Girlfriend

DEVELOPER: Fusion Gaming

All the secrets of romance for 65p? Result! Top tips include "girls like free drinks" and "act distant towards her". Watch out ladykind, here comes OXM ready to ply you with booze and ignore the hell outta you. It can't fail.

RATING ★★★★★



Retro Arcade Adventure Remade

DEVELOPER: SIACTRO

Knifing *RAAR*'s 8-bit beast hordes is diverting enough, thanks to responsive controls and crisp looks. It's a shame then, that SIACTRO goes and spoils the goodwill with rotten boss fights that are less *Smash TV*, more smash in your TV.

RATING ★★★★★



Upoar

DEVELOPER: dirtysteve

Streets of Rage meets skinheads meets shonky 3D modelling, resulting in what looks like Bruce Willis duffing up an army of angry Sinead O'Connors. Throw in arm animations that could be punches, could be pat-a-cake, and this is a total disaster.

RATING ★★★★★



Discovery+

DEVELOPER: noowanda

A procedurally generated block landscape, 8-bit textures, plinky-plonky music... noowanda's lucky Notch is too busy swimming in his money vault to deal with copyright infringement. Not that this visually choppy, feature-light clone tricks anyone.

RATING ★★★★★



Indiemon: Earth Nation

DEVELOPER: RicolaVG

Pokemon lives and dies on its monster design. With artwork that'd make even a *Digimon* fan cringe, *Indiemon* makes you want to catch 'em all and throw 'em into a furnace.

RATING ★★★★★

Xbox Movies

The latest films available for download on Xbox Live



The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey

STARRING: Martin Freeman, Richard Armitage **DIR:** Peter Jackson

The first of Peter Jackson's new Middle-earth trilogy, which many huffily maintain shouldn't be a trilogy at all. Other complaints include the fact it's not as epic as the earlier series, and that there are extra characters who weren't in the book.

Ignore the detractors. Considering the regular standard of Hollywood fantasy – not least in the wake of *Rings'* success – *The Hobbit* is a smart adaptation full of quality. Freeman is the perfect Bilbo, the potentially chaotic dwarves are managed coherently, and the action is upped to at least compete with the film's predecessors. While the material is chopped and stretched, its heart remains constant, never illustrated better than in the key, ring-exchanging scene of Gollum and Bilbo riddling in the dark, which brings a thousand bedtime stories to flickering life.

RATING ★★★★★

"While the material is chopped and stretched, its heart remains constant"



WATCH THIS IF YOU ENJOYED

MASS EFFECT 3

Another huge and successful trilogy which everyone complained about despite the fact that it was of an exceptional standard and the complainers should really get out more.



Life Of Pi

STARRING: Suraj Sharma, Irrfan Khan, Adil Hussain **DIR:** Ang Lee

There's no way to dress this up – this is a film about a boy on a boat with a tiger, that hopes to open your eyes to the wonders of existence. How successful it is will probably be determined largely by how much you like tigers, but the film keeps its end up with seamless effects that occasionally stretch all the way to astonishing and by making two hours in the sea with a cat not boring.

RATING ★★★★★



Seven Psychopaths

STARRING: Colin Farrell, Sam Rockwell **DIR:** Martin McDonagh

Twisting hipster crime comedy with a slouching '90s attitude. Colin Farrell and Sam Rockwell slide easily into the roles of best pal LA deadbeats pulled into a potentially deadly spot of bother thanks to a series of coincidences involving several psychopaths. It's convoluted and contrived, yes, but carries enough swagger – and a cast you'd watch staring at the wall – to earn a recommendation.

RATING ★★★★★



Pitch Perfect

STARRING: Anna Kendrick, Skylar Astin **DIR:** Jason Moore

Musical comedy that a cynic might describe as 'Glee Goes To College' (and does a bit of a cappella). But that wouldn't do justice to the barbed laughs wrung from the boys-against-girls setup, or the film's biggest strength, that BY GOD it's good to watch a supportive, celebratory story about girls in college instead of the regular 'Boys take trousers down while guffawing' horror.

RATING ★★★★★



Jack Reacher

STARRING: Tom Cruise, Rosamund Pike **DIR:** Christopher McQuarrie

Cruise scores as the down-on-the-rules, big-on-morals (and punching) Jack Reacher, even though he's only three feet tall. The best bits are when the film revels unthinkingly in '80s action vigilantism, the worst when it recalls that, hey, that's not cool these days, and shouldn't we be investigating a crime or something? The result is wobbly, but it's at its best when it's most stupid.

RATING ★★★★★

It's all relative
Associated adventures

HELLBOY II: THE GOLDEN ARMY

Hellboy helmer Guillermo Del Toro was first choice as director of *The Hobbit* before ongoing delays caused him to pull out. Check out his distinct style in this superhero story.



THE HITCHHIKER'S GUIDE TO THE GALAXY

Martin Freeman is excellent as another reluctant English adventurer, Arthur Dent, in this so-so accidental space tourist comedy.



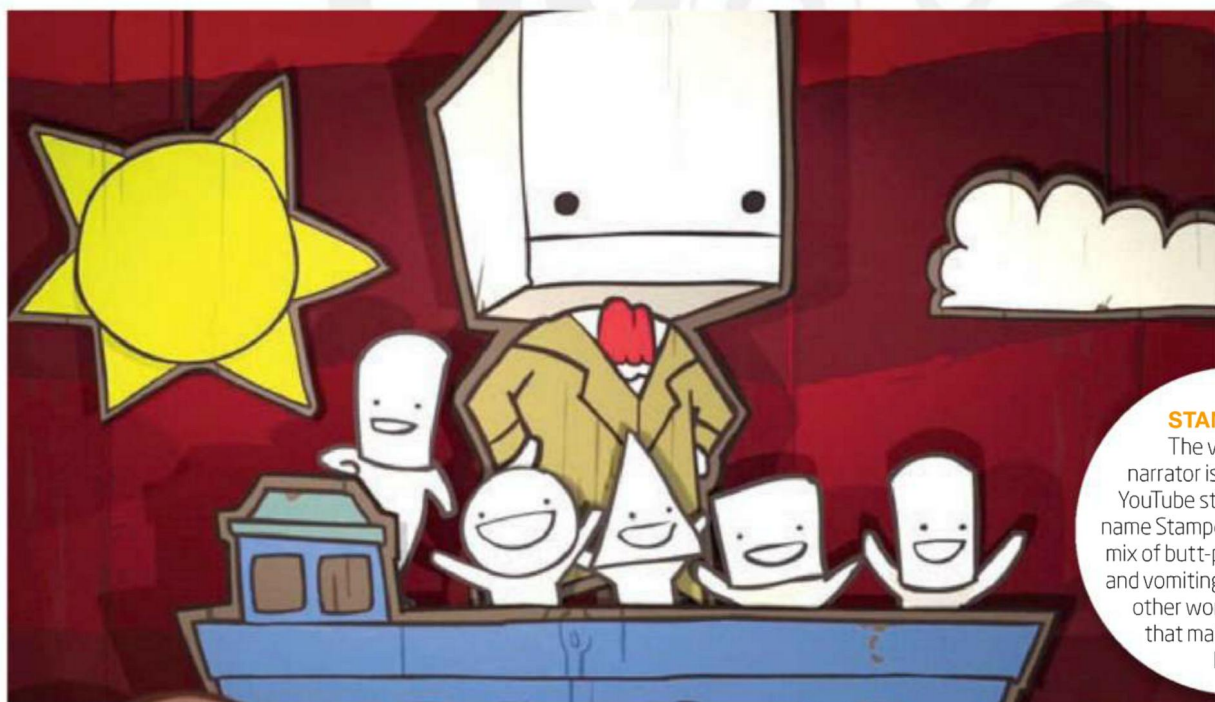
KING KONG

Peter Jackson's reward for winning Hollywood with the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy was making a film about a really angry gorilla who falls in love with a pretty lady and climbs a New York skyscraper.



Online Review

Revisiting games to see how they stand up on Xbox Live



Gettin' a helpin' hand from mah best buddy.

STAMPER TV

The voice of the narrator is Will Stamper, a YouTube star who uses the name StamperTV. It's the usual mix of butt-pinching cartoons and vomiting onto puppets. In other words, everything that makes life worth living.

BattleBlock Theater

Buckled your pants? Let's dance

Once you've solo'd the fiendish Vault, and watched the best videogame ending in history, you deserve a short rest. Maybe you could use the time to watch the ending again, six times: no other game has dared to draw lines between poignant futility, a man screaming "buckle your pants", and the fact that sometimes life just doesn't make any sense.

When you've wiped that off your face, dip into the co-op. All of the levels have a co-op counterpart that takes the same

broad themes and challenges, and tweaks them to require a level of thoughtful interaction. When playing with a companion, if you find yourself on a high

ledge, you can hoick up your buddy and sling each other over long distances. Joining a Quick Match is likely to be frustrating, however, as a co-op partner chosen at random is likely to be stupid, meaning that when said partner can't see that you've solved the puzzle and need their

help, this becomes one of the most skin-rippingly frustrating games around. With no in-game way to tell them what to

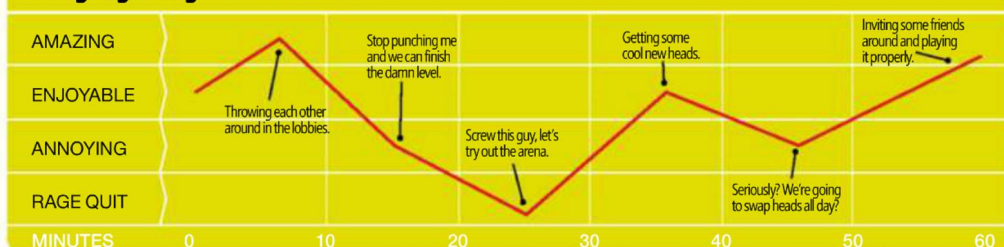
do, voice chat is essential if you don't want to spend precious minutes slamming your gamepad into your forehead and hissing the very worst profanities.

Getting a-head

If co-op doesn't tickle your ivories, you've also got the competitive Arena modes. However, trying to join a match is hard – after a fairly short search, we were advised

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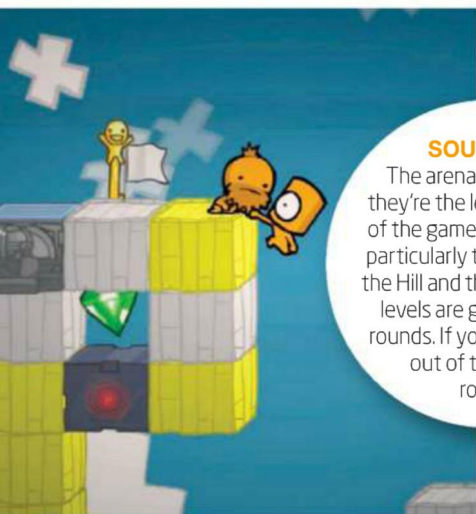


» Details



ARCAD
BATTLEBLOCK
THEATER

In short:
An adorable pure-blooded platformer that's set to a big, chunky grid. Beyond the brilliant solo, there's co-op, competitive, and a level creator, too.
Released: Apr 2013
Score: 9/10

**SOUL KING**

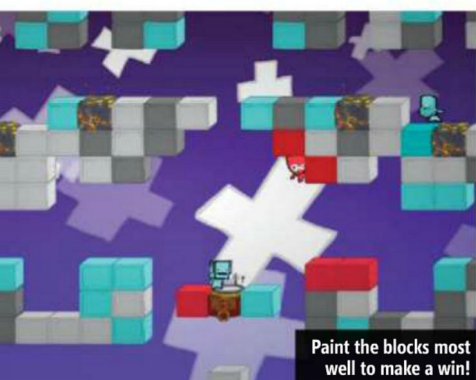
The arenas are fun, but they're the least brilliant bit of the game. Horse mode is particularly thin, but King of the Hill and the vampiric Soul levels are good for a few rounds. If you can get them out of the trading rooms.



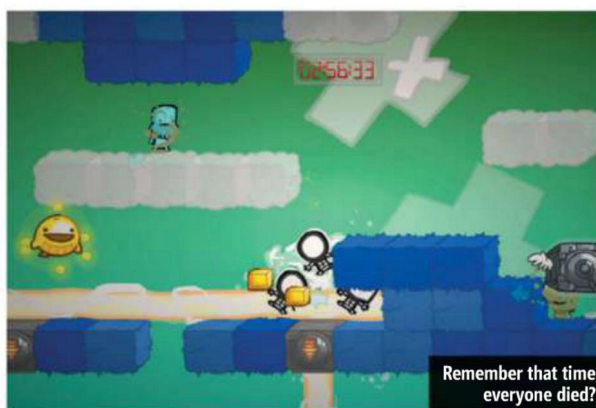
Elvis and Pyramid Head check out a scone.



Every co-op level is cleverly tweaked.



Paint the blocks most well to make a win!



Remember that time everyone died?

to try hosting instead. So we did, which resulted in a quickly populated party of four. Four people who immediately decamped to the trading booths and started swapping heads. No-one seemed to want to actually *play* the game. It just turned into a massive, kinky friend-swapping party. Turns out completing your friend collection is more popular than playing a round of block painting.

The final aspect of online is the collection of community-made levels. The blocks were pretty exhaustively exploited in the main game, but the invention of the community has led to some poisonously tricky and stunningly creative affairs. The level editor is wonderfully simple, but seeing what other people have built consumes us with awe-struck inadequacy.

"Seeing other user-made levels consumes us with awe-struck inadequacy"

So, *BattleBlock Theater* has a range of online modes. But if you want to play co-op, get voice chat running at the very minimum, and play locally if at all possible. When you venture into the Arena levels, communication isn't as important, but be prepared to host a game and deal with people who just want to complete their head collections. And just like the co-op, Arena is way better when your mates are sat around you. This joyful voyage on the SS Friendship feels ten times better when your bestest pals and buddies are within hugging distance. And by hugging, we do of course mean punching.

XBOX 360 VERDICT
LIVE RATING
Potentially brilliant with a group of friends
8

Also Playing

**Monaco**

Monaco has taught us some crucial life lessons. Not least that we're never going to rob a bank. On our own we can just about keep an eye on the guards patrolling *Monaco*'s expensive corridors, but add just one more player and the result is messy, slapstick anarchy. Andy Schaz's stylish top-down stealth game is great in single-player, but it's when you're working as a team that its madcap heist movie inspirations come to the fore.

9

**Dark Souls**

It always pulls you back. We spent this month PvP-ing amongst the gloomy forest of Darkroot Garden, where even now the servers are busy enough to ensure plenty of players lie in wait, ready to kill you – most wielding huge swords you've never seen. Still, we did repeatedly stab some poor wretch who looked to be attempting a Level 1 run while he was battling forest NPCs. In fairness, he probably would've killed us if we let him make the first move.

9

**Injustice**

New arrival Batgirl is incredibly agile, and her hand-to-hand strikes are perfect for building lengthy combos. Zoning capabilities and a move set built for rushing down foes make her an excellent online combatant, as specials like her Smoke Bomb can instantly close the gap between you and tricky players who prefer to keep their distance. The only downside is her Super Move must be done mid-air, and can be difficult to land online.

8

THE OXM Replay

Craig Owens plays
with knives in
Ninja Gaiden



Publisher Tecmo
Developer Team Ninja
Release March 2004
Played by Craig Owens

I remember the first time I tried to take on a tightly-knit bunch of Black Spider Ninjas. I remember it because they eviscerated me. These days, *Dark Souls* has cornered the market in player punishment – but in the era of the original Xbox *Ninja Gaiden* was the king of cruelty. Tecmo's action title might look like *DmC* or *Bayonetta* – but in those games the challenge is all about racking up high scores and making spectacular combos last as long as you can. *Ninja Gaiden*, by contrast, was all about trying to survive.

That doesn't mean it wasn't an intelligently built combat game. Compared to *Bayonetta* and *Dante*, Ryu Hayabusa might lack flair – there are no hairdo-powered mega-attacks or cocky grandstanding from this hero – but his core moveset of supple, flexible attacks and dodges convey a very ninja-like brand of



The "Black" re-release added new enemies.

brutal efficiency, all mapped to tight, responsive controls.

Of course, a lot of people who bought *Ninja Gaiden* weren't really in a position to enjoy their ever increasing mastery of Ryu's abilities, because they got stuck half an hour in. The first boss is a difficulty spike so large, razor sharp and pointed that Vlad the Impaler would leap at the chance to skewer his victims with it – probably cutting his hand open in the process and dying of ironic blood loss.

By the end of the game, that first battle seems rather quaint – the boss in question has no ranged attacks and is easy to dodge away from. But the first few attempts to best him are a harsh lesson in *Ninja Gaiden*'s unwritten ruleset: never stop moving, always be ready to be block, and for goodness' sake don't get cocky. You know that classic boss fight error of trying to sneak in an extra hit when you should really have moved away in preparation for your next opening? Well, pretty much every hit after the first one in *Ninja Gaiden* is an extra cheeky hit. And sometimes you're pushing your luck with that.

Yet the game is (some unfortunate camera behaviour aside) never unfair. Enemies behave predictably and in exploitable ways, and the secret to victory is simply paying attention: play defensively when you need to and strike hard whenever you can. There's a powerful thrill, even now, to this lighting-quick game of reflexes. *Ninja Gaiden*'s as unrealistic as any game you might mention when it comes to its depiction of swordplay, yet there's something about the way you are able to rapidly whittle down an opponent's life bar by playing smartly – and the way that mistakes can cost you dearly – that captures the deadly stakes of fighting with blades.

That said, a lot of enemies have guns, rocket launchers or claws. The setting is a bizarre blend of hi-tech and fantastical – moving from demon dimensions to well-equipped military compounds in the time it takes for a pink flurry of cherry blossom to flutter across the screen. Human battles are the most fun – demonic limbs just don't slice off as satisfyingly – and also provide some of the silliest



We've seen better looking demons, we admit.



Ryu can use more than just a sword.



XBOX CLASSICS

WHY YOU SHOULD PLAY...

FAHRENHEIT

PUB: ATARI // DEV: QUANTIC DREAM
RELEASE: SEPTEMBER 2005

Is it getting hot in here?

Also known as *Indigo Prophecy* in the US, *Fahrenheit* was an important forerunner to the PS3's *Heavy Rain*. A paranormal thriller, *Fahrenheit* let you play as several different characters throughout the course of the story, whose fates would eventually intertwine while unravelling the mystery behind a spate of unsolved murders in New York.

Paranormal thriller? Sounds creepy.

It was, in parts. The game opened with IT manager Lucas Kane waking from a trance in the bathroom of a New York diner, where he had unknowingly stabbed a complete stranger to death. Playing as Lucas, you had to choose how to cover up the evidence and exit the diner. Whatever you did affected how police officers later in the story approached the resulting murder investigation.

So it's action-packed, then?

Kind of. One of the unique aspects of *Fahrenheit* was the ability to perform mundane tasks alongside the more spectacular scenes. One moment you could be involved in a shoot-out or a car chase, and the next you could be making some coffee. It was this attention to life's little details that made it stand out. Those, and the interactive sex scene.

Sorry, what?

Yep, and you thought the one in *Heavy Rain* was cringe-worthy. There are actually a few sex scenes in *Fahrenheit*, but only one had you pushing buttons in time to thrusts. Our thumbs haven't felt the same since.



One of the toughest battles in the game, this.

match-ups: Ninja vs. Tank is a delightfully incongruous battle, beaten only by the amazing Ninja vs. Attack Helicopter.

Ninja Gaiden had sequels, of course – *Ninja Gaiden II*'s rather good, in fact, but by the time that *Ninja Gaiden III* turned up Ryu's blade had dulled – but it's the first game in the series that has the most exquisite ratio of challenge to reward. Plenty of games cast you as a deadly martial arts expert – few make you earn the privilege.

The third time I fought a pack of Black Spider Ninjas, I was ready. I somersaulted in the air and transitioned into a flying swallow attack, relieving my first victim of his head. I hit the second with a combo before he had time to react, though I wasn't quick enough to stop the third. I blocked and pulled off a perfect counter, killing him in a single blow. Barely ten seconds had passed.

"In the original Xbox era, *Ninja Gaiden* was the king of cruelty"



Meanwhile in OXM

Issue 47 | October 2005

A baby-faced **Wayne Rooney** is confirmed as the face of **FIFA 06**, along with Ronaldinho. Roo is quoted as saying: "It's a great honour for a young player like myself to be chosen to be featured on the cover of **FIFA**." Bless.

Readers voted **Doom 3** as the **scariest shooter ever** in The Hot Topic, with 60% of the overall vote. **Alien 3** came next, with just 20%. **We demand a recount.**

Jobbing actor **Stephen Dorff** (of *Blade* fame) is credited on the OXM staff page for writing tips prior to his stint on **Far Cry**. He is also said to have gone on a shop run for cokes and Yorkie bars. No mention is made of him attempting to ice-skate uphill.

Xbox 360 Access got an early look at **Resi 5** and drools over its "sun-bleached desert setting" while bemoaning the fact that **Resi 4** "one of the scariest and best games ever" never came out on **Xbox**.

Chris Gibbs, executive producer of **Battlefield 2's** single-player element, talks to us about a unique new feature called 'hotswapping', where players can instantly switch between any troops on the field. "Effectively, **you are the army!**"

Far Cry Instincts earns a 9.1/10 and the title of Game of the Month in part thanks to its **incredible scenery**. Past OXM, just wait until you get a load of **Blood Dragon**.

Xbox 360 Must Buy

Our selection of the finest games currently available

KINECT 
XBOX LIVE ARCADE 



The Elder Scrolls: Skyrim

Imagine *Oblivion* with better levelling, better characters, better fighting and a gripping tale of dragon-based apocalypse. Hi, *Skyrim*!

10



Deus Ex: Human Revolution

This cyberpunk RPG/shooter hybrid has an unparalleled sense of depth and scope. If you're a sci-fi fan, this is unmissable stuff.

10



Project Gotham Racing 4

THE BEST RACING GAME EVER. Is that something of a final statement, do you think? We like to have the last word.

10



Grand Theft Auto IV

With DLC like *The Lost and Damned* to keep you entertained, there's even more reason to pay Liberty City a visit. Just brilliant.

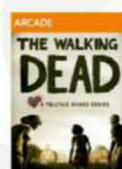
10



Minecraft

After you've spent an afternoon making a castle, you'll finally understand what all the hype was about. The split-screen mode is utterly brilliant.

10



The Walking Dead Season 1

Telltale's interactive drama only just counts as a game, but it manages to deliver some of the most powerful storytelling around. Get it on XBLA or in stores.

9



FIFA 13

Not quite the leap forward that last year managed, and *PES* is snapping at its heels, but this is still the best football game you can get on Xbox 360.

9



Batman: Arkham City

The Dark Knight's first open-world outing is a superb smash-hit. Have Alfred iron your very best cape and come and get involved.

9



Kinect Sports: Season Two

We never thought pretending to play darts could be quite as much fun as this. Rare's mastery of all Kinect's tech shines through.

9



Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 3

Same addictive multiplayer, paired with a bombastic story that actually makes sense this time. The Xbox Live essential.

9



Dark Souls

Devastatingly evil but utterly compelling. *Dark Souls* is a love letter to fans of old-school gaming. Think you're hardcore? Get this in your life.

9



Bulletstorm

Not nearly as stupid as it pretends to be, *Bulletstorm* packs an impressive, breakneck-paced Story mode and still has time to include Skillshots in the mix.

9



Gears of War 2

Still our favourite *Gears* title – it has the most interesting campaign of the four and the still-interesting multiplayer invented the now industry-standard Horde mode.

9



The Orange Box

The best package on Xbox 360, bar none. Two great shooters and a stunning puzzle game: we can't think of a better way to invest your money.

9



Bayonetta

Sega's saucy witch has utterly seduced us, with action that just keeps increasing in scale until your head explodes in a shower of sparks and confetti.

9



YOURS FOR £10 DISCOUNT GAMES WORTH GETTING

BULLETSTORM > It might say co-developed by Epic, but we can't help but think that, at heart, this is People Can Fly's game. The basic idea of its Skillshot system (that you earn extra points for killing foes in imaginative ways) fails to explain just how cleverly its levels have been designed: filled with props and explosives that are perfect to boot enemies into. It's all wrapped up in gorgeous visuals and some of the most creatively foulmouthed dialogue we've ever heard.

Score 9/10

Buy it: £6.29, Amazon



Rayman Origins

The ageless, limbless wonder is back for a bout of four-player co-op platforming fun. Go on, give in to your childish side just this once – this is ace.

9



Red Dead Redemption

Not merely *GTA* with cowboys, the gripping story, beautiful world and brilliant characters make this the best cowpoke game ever. Multiplayer's fun, too.

9



Borderlands 2

A huge world, some amazing weapons and an excellent script make this one of the best co-op adventures you can have. Get your ass to Pandora.

9



XCOM: Enemy Unknown

Intense tactics with a personal twang, *XCOM* is an oddly emotional strategy game. Tough, deep, and surprisingly addictive. Don't miss it.

9



Trials Evolution

Just as unmissable as the original, but with better tracks and nicer graphics. It's got levels based on *Inception* and *Limbo* in it, too. Icing on the cake.

8



Binary Domain

Japan's answer to *Gears of War* features OTT characters, awesome headshots, and boss fights like nothing you've ever seen before. Must-play stuff.

8

DEPARTING THIS MONTH

SO LONG, AND THANKS:
THE GAME WE'RE
REMOVING FROM THE LIST

Condemned: Criminal Origins
Atmospheric isn't the word – relentlessly grim is more like it. But *Condemned* makes way for the new *Resi* horror show.



"Forget other so-called stealth games, *Mark of the Ninja* is silent, deadly bliss"



Portal 2

Valve turns a series of sci-fi test chambers into the funniest game you'll ever play – and includes what is probably the most satisfying co-op, too.

10



BioShock

The latest, *Infinite*, is excellent but if you're new to the series you have to start here. The world of Rapture still captivates, and the second-act twist offsets the dull ending.

10



Mass Effect 3

Those diving in at the end won't get the same impact, but for fans of the series this is sublime. A brilliant end to the best RPG trilogy ever.

10



Dishonored

A genuine first-person classic that you'll want to play through at least twice. A near-perfect blend of stealth and action, set in a fantastic world.

9



Resident Evil Revelations HD

Who'd have thought a handheld Nintendo exclusive would have scrubbed up so well? A studied homage to older *Resi* games, it's a real return to form.

9



Sleeping Dogs

A canny magpie that's stolen the best bits from a range of games, this combines *Batman*, *GTA* and overblown action combat. Unexpectedly brilliant.

9



Far Cry 3

Take the brilliant scale of *Far Cry 2*, remove the awful checkpoints, and set it somewhere beautiful and green. You've got yourself an unmissable shooter.

9



Saints Row: The Third

The most outrageously silly game we've seen in years. It's a rough-edged *GTA* played for laughs – rarely in the best possible taste, but always entertaining.

9



Forza 4

The best pure racing simulation on Xbox 360, and possibly anywhere. The franchise has everything except a sense of humour, which it has licenced from *Top Gear*.

9



Craig Owens

WHY YOU SHOULD BUY...

MARK OF THE NINJA > Stealth games can be frustrating: spoiled by trial and error, the difficulty of tracking the sounds you're making, and general fuzziness in their rulesets. Not so with *Mark of the Ninja*. Klei's side-scrolling stealthier. As well as looking beautiful – the same cartoony art style seen in *Shank* replicated here – everything you need to know: sightlines, audio ranges, the trajectory of a throwing knife, is woven into the graphics, and you can freeze time at any moment to plan your next move. Silent, deadly bliss.

WHICH GAME IS YOUR MUST BUY?
LET US KNOW: oxm@futurenet.com



Mark of the Ninja

Forget other so-called stealth games, this 2D ninjathon is the real deal – yet it avoids the frustration that's so common in the genre. A modern classic.

9



Halo Wars

Halo as you've never seen it before – through the eyes of a commander hovering over the battlefield. It's the thinking person's *Halo* game.

9



BattleBlock Theater

Forget the pure masochism of *Meat Boy* – this platformer is a powerful distillation of joy. It took The Behemoth years to make – and every day shows. It's brilliant.

9



Blur

Bizarre Creations' decision to shed the *PGR* franchise for a new purebred arcade racer paid off nicely with two excellent career modes.

9



Left 4 Dead 2

Valve's superlative multiplayer architects have created another zombie-mashing classic. More varied campaigns and new weapons await you.

9



Skulls of the Shogun

A funny and smart turn-based strategy gem that riffs off classic games like *Advance Wars* on the Game Boy. If you've exhausted *XCOM*, play this next.

9

THE LIVE WEEKENDER

THREE GREAT BUYS FOR UNDER 2,100 MICROSOFT POINTS

Mass Effect 3: Citadel

Shepard and crew take some well-earned shore leave in this final piece of *ME* DLC. A touching, funny swansong for the series.



Price: 1,200 MP

Quarrel

Accept that you will, at times, be matched against superhuman anagram spotters and this is an excellent, fast-paced word game for a bargain price.



Price: 400 MP

Flotilla

One of the finest games on the Indie channel, *Flotilla* is demented *Star Trek* – a tactical game of turn-based strategy that realises there's no 'up' in space.



Price: 400 MP



Kinect Party

Kinect is at its best when it's not taking itself too seriously. *Kinect Party* is a fantastic example of family-based antics and pleasant daftness.

8



Super Street Fighter IV

With ten new characters added to the roster, fans of the *Street Fighter* series won't fail to enjoy this new 'super' offering. The best fighter on Xbox 360.

8



THE 26 BEST NEXT GEN RUMOURS

There's been some rubbish talked about the Xbox One. Here's a rundown of some of the rumours that didn't come to pass. Did you believe any of them?

01# It needs to have an internet connection because it's powered by the kinetic energy of animated GIFs.

02# It'll be able to produce a thin film of lubricating mucus.

03# It'll decline to send images to any TV under 47". It will transmit a message that reads, "Do you expect me to perform on this? I trained at RADA, darling."

04# When you turn it off, it will sigh dreamily and whisper, "I love you."

05# Gamepads will feature two small tongues that will gently lick your palms if you are playing well.

06# Microsoft will one-up Sony with a new proprietary triangular disc that is ejected, still spinning, at random intervals.

07# This triangular disc will be so expensive to license that Microsoft itself won't be able to afford it.

08# If there is a PS Move in Kinect's vision, the gamepad will vibrate angrily until it's removed.

09# If you visit a sexy site on Internet Explorer, it will post a screenshot on Facebook.

10# Kinect 2.0 will be equipped with a set of silent rotors and can follow you, hovering at groin height, around the house. Having a shower or on the toilet? It doesn't care. Wave to activate! WHY AREN'T YOU WAVING?

11# A new form of copy-protection will require you to be physically connected to your Xbox at all times by a steel dog collar.

12# Parental controls will include two new settings: "You are over 30 years old. You should have the critical faculties to not want to play this stuff," and, "You are 12. That's really cool. I won't tell anyone if you just steal some money from your mum's purse and post it to this address."

13# TV shows will increasingly feature characters who give Kinect voice commands, like "Xbox, Go Home." Just to dick with people watching TV.

14# It will not be sold in Australia because it's too far away.

15# It will be full of spiders, and the first time you turn it on the fan will blow them all, furious and concussed, out of the vent.

16# HoverKinect™ will recharge via a narrow proboscis that slips conveniently into your veins.

17# It will smooth over social situations by screaming "AWW-KWARD!" if there's a lull in conversation, and say, "ARE YOU GUYS, YOU KNOW, DOING IT?" if it sees two people touch.

18# If you point a PS Eye into a Kinect, they will see each other's souls and start crying.

19# The processor will have four hardware cores, each divided into three logical cores and one completely illogical core that's responsible for all the terrible dialogue, crappy acting and stupid level design.

20# It will create tiny human holograms in the centre of your room, and you'll be able to have totally convincing conversations with them about what it's like being a hologram.

21# If you boost the friendship levels of your tiny hologram man, he will eventually agree to stand in your mouth.

22# If you eat the tiny hologram man, he will live in your stomach and you will gain the ability to travel along electrical cables.

23# David Cage is making the first fully non-interactive game for Xbox and releasing it exclusively in arthouse cinemas.

24# The FIFA franchise will branch out with FIFA FOFUM. It'll be the same game, but the characters will be giants. But everything else is bigger too, so it won't look different. The commentators, however, will shout stuff like, "THAT'S REMARKABLE: SUAREZ IS GRINDING ROONEY'S BONES TO MAKE HIS BREAD."

25# In order to discourage tedious character design, head detection software will be able to recognise generic shaven-headed marines in dusty brown landscapes. Wig algorithms will automatically add procedural cartoon hairpieces.

26# The disc slot will be surrounded by a pair of big meaty lips that can pucker, purse and wolf-whistle. It will suckle eagerly at a bottle of warm milk.

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C. PARIS

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